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GWERIN

A Half-Yearly Journal of
FOLK LIFE

Edited by
IORWERTH C. PEATE

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EDITORIAL NOTES

IN his Foreword to the first volume of *Folkliv* in 1937 Dr. Sigurd Erixon complained that Folk Life had 'long been leading a more or less dependent existence as an ambulating guest of certain related branches of science' and had been 'awarded a certain amount of space' only 'in archaeological, historical, artistic, geographical or philological publications'. This is true: the need for a journal of folk life in Britain has long been felt. This need was discussed in the International Congress held at Stornoway and Oban in 1953, when it was agreed that the Keltic countries, which have long given a lead in Britain in folk-life research, could be expected to provide such a journal. The burden was laid squarely on the shoulders of the person who raised the matter, the present Editor. GWERIN is the result.

GWERIN is Welsh for 'folk' (cf. *Laos* as the title of another international folk journal). Since the inspiration for this journal, and a high percentage of its subscribers, come from Wales, the Editor felt that a Welsh title would not be inappropriate. GWERIN, however, is in no sense national: we hope that on its pages the problems of folk life in England, Ireland, Man, Scotland and Wales will be adequately discussed. Articles and notes on links with Scandinavia, Europe and America will be specially welcomed.

It was hoped that from the first number, the printing of sixty pages would be possible. But until the number of subscribers is increased substantially it will be impossible to exceed the present forty-eight. Special thanks are due to the several hundreds of subscribers who by their support have made possible the publication of the journal at a low price. If readers will help in obtaining more subscribers, considerably more print and illustrations will be possible in future numbers.

The Editor will be grateful for articles on any subjects associated with folk life in these Islands (authors and publishers, too, are invited to send books for review). We appeal in particular to the countryman, who often has an original contribution to make to our subject. From time to time we hope to report on the progress of our folk museums, on folk collections in museums, and on surveys and projects proposed or carried out in the various countries.

An Fhóir: A Straw-Rope Granary

A. T. Lucas

IN a few scattered districts of the western part of the county of Cork there is, or was till recently, in use a small outdoor granary made of straw rope which has all the appearance of being of very ancient descent. The writer knows no account of it in English published sources and but a single short description in Irish. It has, apparently, no English name. In the Enniskeen and Ballineen districts it was known as a *síogóg* (ʃiː 'goː g);[1] farther west in the neighbourhood of Ballingeary it was called a *fóir* (fo : r'); about Macroom both *fóirín* (a diminutive of *fóir*) and *síogóg* were applied indiscriminately to it; in the Dunmanway area *síogóg* and yet another alternative term, *doimhineóg* (dəi'n'o : g) were used, while from the district of Bantry in the south the name *síogán* (ʃi : g'a : n) has been recorded. Outside west Cork there is, as far as is at present known, either in the printed literature or in the archives of the Irish Folklore Commission, only one single record of it: in the parish of Knockane, west of Killarney, in County Kerry, where, it would seem, the very generalized term *sop* (sʌp)—literally, 'a wisp'—was applied to it. Its known distribution is, therefore, confined to the south-west corner of the country and the writer is not aware of any reference to it, either in Irish or English, earlier than this century. Experience of other aspects of Irish folk life shows, however, that this latter fact is an index of the capriciousness of our sources rather than of the recent origin of the object itself.

The granary was in use on small farms where outbuildings were few and where indoor storage facilities for the grain crop were restricted, although, if the claims made for its virtues are correct, the lack of such facilities need not have been the only reason for its survival down to modern times. As oats have for long been the chief corn crop in the districts where the granary is found, it is oftenest mentioned in connection with the storage of that grain, but it is equally suitable for other cereals as well. Practice in this regard varied from place to place, for while one in-

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[1] For a fuller understanding of the value of the phonetic symbols see *The Irish of West Muskerry* by Brian Ó Cuív, Dublin, 1944.

formant from Tooms,[1] near Macroom, states that he has never seen anything except oats stored in a *síogóg*, another, from Dunmanway,[2] states that 'all our grain: oats, wheat and the very occasional handful of barley which we grew was stored in seven or eight síogógs'. Normally, the grain was stored in the granary in an unwinnowed state. This arose from the necessity for getting the grain quickly under cover after threshing and for speed in constructing the granary while taking advantage of a spell of fine weather, since the work could not be undertaken in the rain and, as will be seen, its erection and the process of filling it go on simultaneously. Moreover, the winnowing in the wind which followed threshing by the flail or the simple horse threshing-machine was tedious work which could only exceptionally be undertaken immediately after threshing. It is said, however, that rats and mice could gain entry to the body of the grain if it was stored in an unwinnowed condition, the mass being firm enough to allow them to make their tunnels through it, which they could not do through winnowed grain.[3]

The granary may be briefly described as a cylindrical, or near cylindrical, body about six feet in diameter and five feet high, consisting of superimposed rings of thick *súgán* (su : 'ga : n) or straw rope, crowned by a conical or domed thatched cap of straw which brings the total height to between seven and twelve feet. The cap projects in an eave above the body to help shed the rain clear of the butt and, in some cases, the body instead of being cylindrical grows in girth towards the top to lend a greater projection to the eave and increase its efficiency.

The following account of the process of construction was recorded by the writer on the farm of William Ahern in the townland of Buddrimeen, near Ballineen, Co. Cork, on 21st September, 1954. There are local variations of this method which will be mentioned later. The maker was John Patterson, a native of Buddrimeen, who has over the years built a large number of them in the district and is an acknowledged expert at the work. He was assisted by one man in the actual work of construction while a second filled in the oats as it was delivered from the threshing machine. Work on the *síogóg* was begun at 2 p.m. and by 6 p.m. it was completed, nothing remaining to be done except to add some fresh straw to the cap after allowing it to settle down for two or three weeks, to finish off the thatching and to rope it down finally against the winter winds.

[1] Information from John Burke, Tooms, Macroom, Co. Cork, 26.1.1956.
[2] Information from Florence Crowley, Dunmanway, Co. Cork, 25.1.1956.
[3] Information from John Patterson, Buddrimeen, Ballineen, Co. Cork, the maker of the *síogóg* the erection of which is later described and to whom the writer is greatly indebted for invaluable help and guidance.

The first step is the selection of a suitable dry firm site in the farmyard or haggard and the provision of a damp-proof foundation for the corn. This is made by spreading on the ground a circular layer of dry twigs and branches—furze bushes, brambles, hedge-clippings and similar material—which is about six feet in diameter and a foot thick (Fig. I, 1, A). The foundation is covered with a layer of straw from a large pile left in readiness nearby which is beaten down on the bushes to form a tolerably level surface. This is, in turn, covered by a layer of pulled straw which lies on it in a close, even coat. To obtain the long bunches of parallel straws which compose this coat a large wad of loose straw is grasped from the pile with both hands and held in front of the body. The hands are jerked apart a few times and after a number of firm tugs the wad divides into two straight bunches, the loose and broken straws falling to the ground, while a further shake disengages any other loose material still sticking to the bunches. These bunches are laid side by side radially over the foundation and fresh ones pulled from the pile and added to the coat until the whole is covered with a firm bed through which the grain cannot filter (Fig. I, 1, B). The next stage is the building up of the body from rings of straw rope, laid one above the other. One man twists the free end of the rope, using a stout stick two or three feet long, around the middle of which the initial loop of straw is lapped. It is essential that the stick be long enough to provide sufficient leverage and strong enough to sustain the considerable weight of the rope which must be kept reasonably taut and clear of the ground while being twisted. A hand-over-hand motion produces a smooth and continuous revolution of the stick. The duty of the second man is to feed straw from the pile into the other end of the twisting rope, a task calling for no little skill to ensure that the rope is of uniform texture and diameter. He holds the end of the rope between the curve of his left arm and his body, moulding it, as it were, by the pressure of his arm while with his right hand he feeds handfuls of straw into the centre of the revolving end. This operation is known in English as 'letting the rope' (Plate I). The rope is about six inches in diameter and a length of approxi-

FIG I. Stages in the Construction of the Straw-rope Granary

1. Plan of foundation showing: (A) the bushes next the ground on which the layer of pulled straw (B) is placed.
2. Plan when three rings of rope are in place showing the pulled straw floor and method of tying rings.
3. Granary three rings high, grain filled in and part of straw lining in place around side.
4. Granary with body nearing completion.
5. Section through finished granary showing method of construction of the cap.
6. Granary completed and roped.

A   B
1

2

3

4

5

6

Z. Johnston.
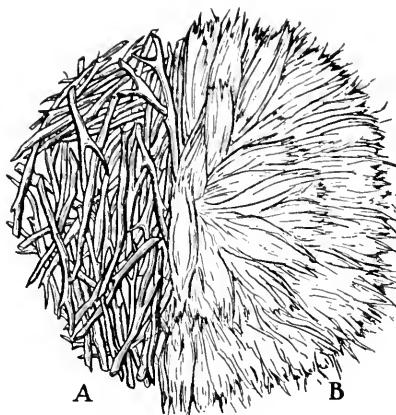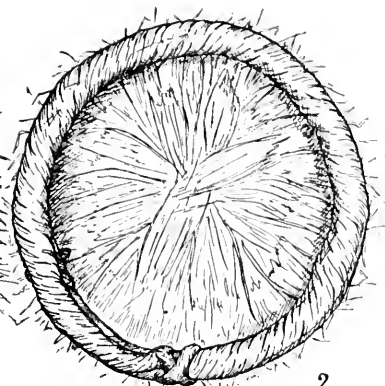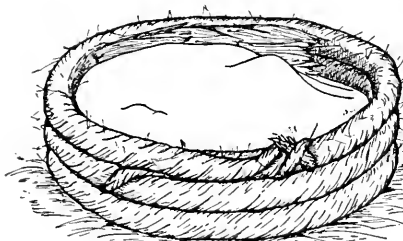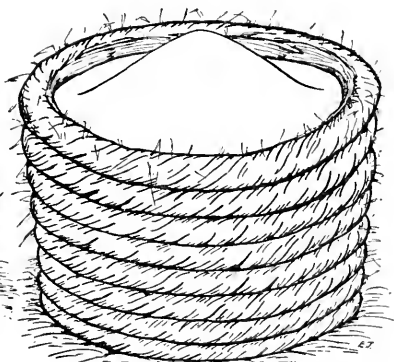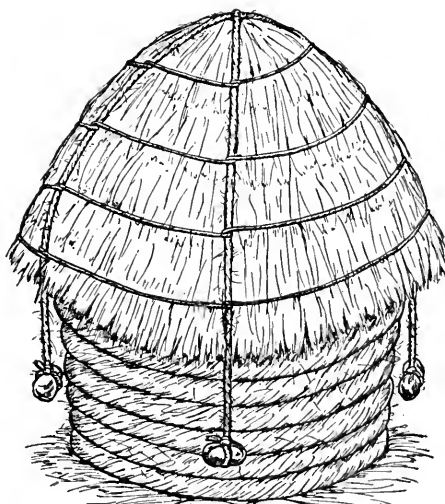
5 FEET

mately twenty feet is required for each ring. Both ends of it taper off into thin tails a couple of feet long. When the first length has been twisted it is laid on the ground to encompass the foundation closely and in as perfect a circle as it is possible to achieve, one end being fastened to the ground by a wooden peg driven through the loop left by the twisting stick, the other being passed several times around the body of the rope where it meets it again so that the rope now lies in a continuous ring. A second length of rope is then twisted and one end of it is fastened to the first ring, away from the joining of the latter, by being looped around it spirally several times. The body of the rope is then carried round the foundation so that it lies snugly on top of the first ring. The free end of the rope is taken for a distance of a couple of feet past the place where the other is tied to the ring below and secured by being looped several times around the fore part of itself which is already in position (Fig. I, 3). This procedure is followed with each successive ring so that every one is anchored to the one below at one spot. Care is taken not to have the joinings come one above the other in case a line of weakness would be produced up the wall at one point and they are staggered fairly evenly round the circumference from base to top. When three rings are in place the third man begins filling in the oats, emptying his sackful in the middle of the foundation. When enough oats has been added to form a heap in the centre of the floor, the men, working from outside the granary, scoop it with their hands towards the circumference. While engaged at this they have on the ground beside them a quantity of pulled straw from which they draw bundles which they place lengthwise along the line of junction of the first two rings on the inside, scooping a quantity of oats against each bundle as it is inserted to hold it in place (Fig. I, 3). They work around the whole circumference of the granary, inserting the bundles in a continuous band to seal off the junction between the rings to preclude any danger of the oats working its way out between them. This, however, is the theoretical aspect of the procedure: in practice, the bundles are so ample and so far from being limited to sealing the point of junction of the rings that each band of them is in contact with the band above and below so that, combined, they amount to a complete straw lining to the wall of the receptacle (Fig. I, 5). This procedure is not observed in all districts by all makers. Quite successful granaries are constructed without it since the weight and girth of the rings themselves are enough to ensure that they bed down on each other to make an efficient seal and it must be regarded only as an extra precaution. Its presence or absence may, to some extent, depend on the nature of the straw ropes themselves which Patterson twists very hard while others leave them comparatively soft. The harder ropes cannot, obviously, bed on each other as well as the softer ones.

Having been completed on the junction of the first and second rings, the operation is repeated on that of the second and third, by which time all the oats of the central heap has been scooped towards the edge to leave a level mass of grain filling the interior of the granary. The straw so inserted is, in Buddrimeen, known as 'fencing'.

The man in charge of the filling now proceeds with his job of emptying sackfuls of oats in a fresh heap in the centre of the granary while the other two twist another length of rope and place it in position on top of the existing rings to make a fourth. After each new ring is added they insert sealing bundles of pulled straw against the junction of the new ring with its fellow below, scooping the oats from the central heap against them as before. The activities of the three operators are so timed that the man engaged on the filling, while keeping the central heap well mounded up, does not build it up excessively to a point where it would spill down against the rings before the others had time to insert the sealing layer against the two uppermost ones. The grain is added at a rate which keeps pace with the twisting and placing of the rings, the insertion of the lining bundles and the scooping of the grain against them to hold them in place. When the granary rises to a certain height it is no longer possible for the man carrying the sacks to step into it to spill the grain in the centre, and a chair or some similar step is placed by the side from which he can mount into it. After the last but one ring has been set in place an interesting operation is carried out. It has already been mentioned that the upper part of side of the granary overhangs the base to provide an extra projection for the eave to throw the drip away from the side and bottom. As constructed, the granary is cylindrical, all the rings being of the same diameter. The requisite slope is produced as follows: the handle of a fork is thrust vertically down along the side of the granary deep into the grain and the projecting part of the handle is pulled outwards against the upper rings (Plate II). This is repeated at close intervals round the circumference of the granary so that the upper rings are stretched. The uppermost rings, being subjected to the full force of the pull, are, naturally, stretched most; those lower down less so, and those at the bottom not at all. The result is that the side assumes the desired outward slope at a uniform angle all round. The force used is considerable, and it is a measure of the strength of the ropes and the soundness of the tyings that they can withstand the strain without breakage or damage. This having been finished, the final ring is put on and the remaining sacks of oats are now filled in and the grain mounded up evenly in the centre. The body of the granary is now complete and it only remains to provide it with the 'head' or cap which will keep it weatherproof.

A fair-sized wad of straw is first forked up on the mounded grain and patted down with the backs of the forks, but not so hard as to displace the grain. The wad is then covered with a loose thatch of long bundles of pulled straw. They are laid side by side running from top to bottom of the incipient cone of the cap, and the lower ones project for a distance of a foot or so beyond the upper ring of the body to form the eave. Another wad of straw is then placed on the top and patted down as before. This comes well down the sides of the cap and serves, by its weight, to hold the pulled straw below it in place. The second wad is, in turn, covered by another coat of pulled straw, which is surmounted by a smaller wad. The addition of alternate wads and layers of pulled straw continues until the cap has attained the desired height and pitch, the wads growing successively smaller until the final capping wad is reached (Fig. I, 5). The surface of the cap is then raked down to dress the thatch and remove loose material, and temporarily secured by two straw ropes—'the quarter ropes'—at right-angles to each other which pass over the top and have their ends fastened to the base. It is allowed to stand thus for two or three weeks to give it time to settle down. As the lower layers of straw become consolidated under the weight of the upper mass, the cap sinks and loses pitch. In the final operation on the granary the temporary ropes are removed, fresh straw is added to the top of the cap to restore it to the correct slope, the whole cap carefully raked, the eave trimmed and new cross-ropes tied over the top. In some cases the final thatching of the cap is done with rushes. If the granary is intended to stand through the winter, additional security is provided by encircling the cap with a series of horizontal ropes, perhaps six in number, which are looped around the 'quarter' ropes and thus form a network on the cap. If fowl are likely to damage the top of the cap by scratching at it, it is protected by an additional capping consisting of a few forkfuls of dry brambles or furze tied down with ropes over all. To prevent fowl and pigs from damaging the bottom of the granary a fence of thorn or furze bushes is piled against it around the base.

This concludes the account of the method followed at Buddrimeen but, as has been said, there were local variations in technique from one district to another. Informants who have supplied information about the practice in their own area are aware that neighbouring localities followed a somewhat different procedure. Such differences were, of course, confined to minor details for the fundamental type remained the same everywhere. The following are the chief variants on which it has been possible to obtain reliable data.

In Gortloughra, near the pass of Keimaneigh, Co. Cork, the foundation of twigs and branches was covered with a quantity of straw over which,

instead of the layer of pulled straw used at Buddrimeen, there was spread a sheet made from meal bags ripped open and sewn together on which the grain was placed. Here, too, the ends of the rings of rope were not fastened to each other nor to the ring below. The rope was 'as thick as a man's thigh' but tapered off in a thin tail at each end. In forming the ring these two tails were laid one on top of the other so that, together, they approximated in thickness to the main diameter of the rope and, with the weight of the superincumbent rings pressing them together, there was no aperture left where they met. If, when the ends were lapped, there was any superfluous length of tail remaining it was turned inwards to project into the interior. In this district no attempt was made to seal off the junction of the rings by the addition of bundles of straw along their inner face since, it was explained, although the rings were tightly twisted, they were not so unyielding that they would not bed down on each other, without leaving any accidental opening. In contrast with the Buddrimeen example, the side of this granary rose vertically and no effort was made to give it an outward slope. The cap was finished off on top with a couple of forkfuls of dry brambles or furze and the cross-ropes were weighted in place by having stones tied to their ends which, on account of the projection of the eave, dangled clear of the side of the granary (Fig. I, 6). The separate horizontal ropes on the cap of the Buddrimeen type are here replaced by a single length which, beginning at the apex, spirals down the cap and is looped around each 'quarter' rope as it meets it in its turns. In this district the granary was known as a *fóir* and the straw rope as a *slibire* (ʃlib'ərə).[1]

From the townland of Garrynapeaka, which lies near Ballingeary in a valley five miles or so to the north of the location of the last type, comes an account of another *fóir* which shows further variations of technique, for here the side of the receptacle was sloped outwards from the base for a distance of half its height, from which point it sloped inwards to the top, the upper inward slope being greater than the lower outward one, for it was thought that this contour provided the best shed for the rain. Thus the diameter, which was five feet at the base, was contracted to three or three-and-a-half at the top. The body of the granary was four to four-and-a-half feet high, and the cap raised the height by another three feet. Points in common with the Gortloughra example are the use of meal bags spread over the foundation and the absence of any sealing straw at the junctions of the rings. Séamus Ó Muimhneacháin, from whom the information was recorded in 1941, claimed that there was no one left in the glen from Tooreenduff to Keimaneigh who could make a *fóir* except himself. He thought, however, that a few were still being constructed in

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[1] Information from Conchubhar Ó Ruairc, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, 1954.

the district between Ballingeary and Inchigeelagh to the east, but stated that they differed from his pattern in having vertical sides.[1]

The peculiar biconical contour of the Garrynapeaka *fóir* is also on record from the Tooms area, near Macroom, where the granary was known as a *fóirín* or 'little *fóir*', the shape being achieved by increasing the diameter of each successive ring up to the middle of the body height and diminishing it from that point to the top.[2] The *doimhineóg* of the Dunmanway neighbourhood was, on the other hand, perfectly cylindrical.[3] In both these localities the granary is almost or quite extinct. The archives of the Irish Folklore Commission preserve memories of its former existence in a few other areas of the county. A man from the townland of Ullanes, near Ballyvourney, describing, in 1938, agricultural methods in the district sixty years previously, stated: 'If you had not a barn you had to make granaries (*fóireanna*) for it [the oats] in the haggard, and it was difficult to make them for there was an art in making a good secure *fóir* to keep the oats dry, but they and everything else [flails, etc.] are vanished now.'[4] In the parish of Kinneigh in the Enniskeen district in 1936 an informant aged seventy-three recorded that 'shigogues' were still made to hold seed oats[5] and in the townland of Carrigroe in the same neighbourhood in 1937 an informant aged eighty-seven also referred to 'shigogues' made of large straw ropes.[6] There is a general consensus of opinion among all informants that in former times the granary in one or other of its variants was to be found everywhere throughout west Cork and the known pattern of its distribution bears this out.

Outside that county there is only one known instance of its occurrence in recent times: in the parish of Knockane, west of Killarney, County Kerry. One account of it was obtained from a woman from the Beaufort district in that parish, but while the identity of the granary is not in question, no details are available.[7] A very explicit description was, however, recorded in 1940 from a man aged eighty-one, living in the townland of Cloghernoosh in the same parish. It would appear that his name for the granary was *sop* (literally 'a wisp'). Its construction followed the general lines of the Cork examples with an interesting additional feature, for, after the cap had been thatched, the body received a coat of what may be described as thatch as well. This consisted of overlapping zones of straw held in place by a series of straw ropes encircling the body horizontally at intervals. The collector of the Irish Folklore Commission, who recorded the account, himself a native of Kerry with an intimate knowledge of the county and a long experience of collecting, stated at the

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[1] *Béaloideas* XI, pp. 185-6.   [2] Information from John Burke, above.
[3] Information from Florence Crowley, above.   [4] Irish Folklore Commission MS. 476, p. 163.
[5] Irish Folklore Commission MS. 203, pp. 439-40.   [6] Irish Folklore Commission MS. 462, p. 210.
[7] Information from E. J. Herbert, Ballyduff, Co. Kerry, 7.2.1956.
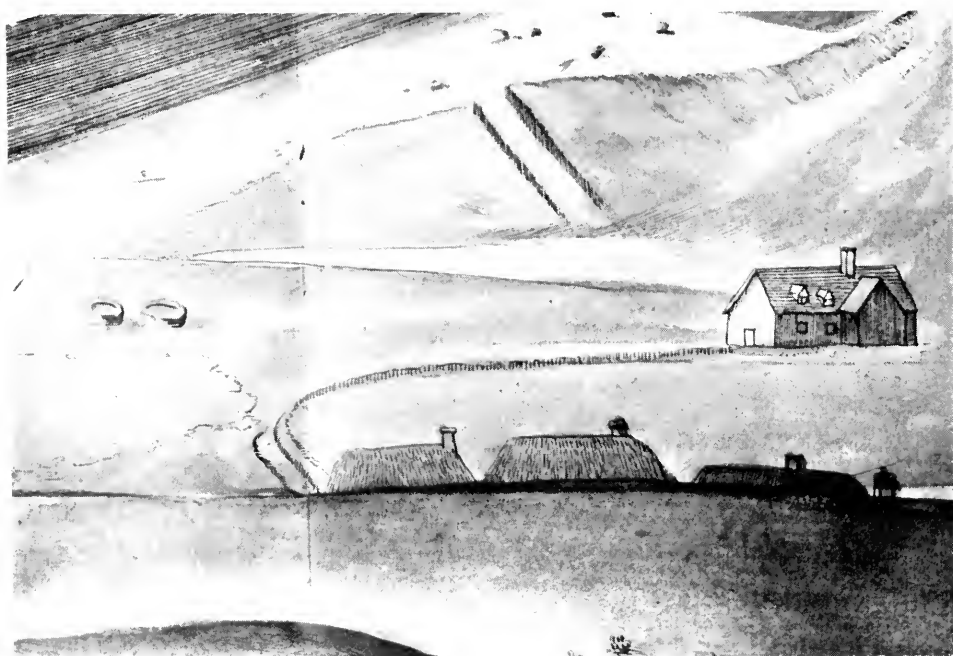
conclusion of his record that he had never come across any other instance of the tradition of the granary in the county.[1] During the late war, when sacks were scarce, one family in the Ardfert district of north Kerry made up a small *síogóg* in the barn to hold the corn crop, but inquiry revealed that this was a family and not a local tradition and that the source of inspiration in this isolated case had been a former servant boy who came from the Killarney neighbourhood.[2]

The withdrawal of small quantities of grain from the granary from time to time is a comparatively simple matter. It may be removed at the top by prising up the cap a little at one point under the eave and scooping the grain out over the uppermost ring, after which the cap is allowed to sink down into place again and any disarrangement of the eave made good. Subsequent withdrawals are made at different points around the eave to maintain the stability of the cap. Opinion seems divided on the question of withdrawing the grain from between the rings lower down, some informants holding that it is inadvisable, others that it can be safely accomplished by forcing two rings apart, scooping out the required quantity of grain and allowing the rings to bed down on each other again to seal the aperture. If, on the other hand, large quantities of grain are needed for sale, for crushing as animal feed, or for use as seed, the granary must be stripped. A fine day is chosen for the work and a sufficient number of sacks is kept in readiness. The cap is removed and the sacks are filled, usually with a bucket. When the level of the grain has been lowered to the bottom of a ring the latter is taken off. Before this is done the ring is tapped all round its circumference to loosen any grain adhering to it or to the 'fencing' which lines it so that it may fall into the heap below. When the foundation is reached, care is taken not to disturb it with the hands or the bucket lest the layer of pulled straw be broken and grain lost. That layer is lifted up at one side for some distance and the edge of a winnowing sheet is slipped in below it, the remainder of the sheet being spread flat on the ground alongside. The side of the layer opposite the sheet is now raised, the whole layer peeled off the foundation in one piece and thrown on to the sheet where the grain can be shaken out of the straw and saved. By observing these precautions the loss of grain can be kept very small and what is scattered is picked up by the fowl.

Nowadays, all the granaries are erected directly on the ground, but formerly, in some farmyards at least, they were placed on special 'stands'. According to descriptions received these consisted of a number of long rectangular stone slabs set on edge on one of their long sides and arranged like the spokes of a wheel to cover an area slightly larger than the bottom of an average *síogóg*. They stood a foot to two feet high and were bridged

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[1] Irish Folklore Commission MS. 716, pp. 294-6.   [2] Information from E. J. Herbert, above.

above by similar slabs laid flat upon them to form a floor on which the granary was placed. While none of this type was encountered in the course of fieldwork on the granary, the writer did discover two 'stands' in a deserted and overgrown haggard on the O'Neill-Daunt estate at Kilcaskan, near Buddrimeen, which, he is reliably informed, were used for the same purpose. They were built of thin slaty stones, but only one remained in a state of preservation which allowed its dimensions to be accurately noted. It was circular in plan and eight feet nine inches in diameter at the top. The base diameter was smaller since the side curved outwards from the ground up, so that the top edge overhung the bottom by a distance of six-and-a-half inches, the height to the upper edge being about two-and-a-half feet. At ground level this mass of masonry was pierced by two shore-like passages running through it from side to side along diameters at right-angles to each other, the whole having a cruciform plan. These passages were twenty-two inches wide at the bottom and twenty-one inches high. The sides rose vertically for twelve inches and were corbelled inwards for the remainder of their height so that the width on top was reduced to twelve inches. They were roofed with a series of flat wide lintel slabs throughout their length. They can hardly have been designed to ventilate the granary since, as far as could be seen, the masonry was solid for a foot above them, and as their construction must have added greatly to the time and labour of building the stand, it is improbable that their insertion was intended to effect the trifling saving in the total quantity of stone required. Perhaps, by providing a through draught, they were intended to prevent the masonry mass itself from becoming water-logged and conveying damp to the corn above. Stands of such elaborate construction cannot have been typical of the haggards of the local small farmers but, if the use ascribed to them above be correct, they show that, in one case at least, the granaries were in use on holdings much larger than theirs.

The advantages claimed for the granary—and there is no reason to suppose that they are exaggerated—explain, in part, its survival in a region which, although hilly, is far from being economically backward or depressed and among a population whose high and sprightly intelligence commands national recognition. It affords perfectly dry storage for the grain and can stand up successfully to all conditions of weather. Its relatively modest dimensions are deceptive, for one of average size can hold three to four tons of grain, and, if the need arise, it can, of course, be increased in size and strength to hold a much larger quantity, and Patterson, on one occasion, erected one which held six tons of oats. A further advantage is the speed with which it can be constructed by so few hands, four hours sufficing for the one built at Buddrimeen, with but two

men engaged in the actual making, with another to keep it filled with grain as the work proceeded. With additional help this time could, naturally, be considerably shortened, for the chief delay is in the twisting of the ropes, and if extra persons were available to keep a supply of these on hand and proportionate labour to increase the rate of filling, the erection could proceed at a very rapid pace. Besides, if sufficient hands were available, it was customary to proceed with the erection of two or more granaries simultaneously instead of completing them one at a time, a method which gave full scope to everyone to work at full speed. Perhaps even greater than all these advantages is the fact that the crop itself provides all the raw material for its construction, for nothing but straw is called for except the bushes for the foundation and the meal-bag sheet, and even this latter, as we have seen in the Buddrimeen specimen, which probably represents an older tradition, can be effectually replaced by a layer of pulled straw.

As a few more years will see the final extinction of the granary it is worth recording the details of a visit paid by the writer to the Ballineen district in February this year (1956). Five granaries, all containing oats, were found in use. One, in the haggard of James McCarthy of Buna-numera, was twenty-five feet in circumference and was estimated to contain between three and four tons of grain. It was built of eight *súgán* rings, only three of which were visible below the eave. The head or cap, which was originally eight feet high but had sunk down to six feet, was held in place by cross ropes, having their ends tied to one of the lower rings and a series of six horizontal ones (Plate III). Three other granaries which stood in a row in a sloping field on the holding of William Moore of Kildee were 24½, 23 and 21½ feet in circumference, with respective heights of 6½, 6½ and 5½ feet. These were built up of seven rings each, the ropes being thicker and softer than those which Patterson uses. They were not thatched but, instead, were covered completely with a layer of dressed straw kept in place by cross and horizontal ropes. In his younger days William Moore was famous in the locality for his skill in erecting the granaries but, since he is now seventy-seven years old, he excused himself on the grounds of old age for not having his *síogógs* properly thatched. The remaining example was on William Ahern's farm in Buddrimeen, where the one recorded in 1954 was erected by John Patterson, who also made the present one. It was taller than any of the others examined, being about eight feet high, and it was capped by a wad of dry brambles to prevent the fowl from damaging the top, and the base was also protected against their depredations by a line of furze branches tied against it by an encircling rope.

It is difficult to believe that the very limited known distribution to the western half of Cork and one adjacent area in Kerry represents the maximum extension of this granary. Although constructed from exceedingly simple materials, it is quite adequate for its purpose and its very simplicity must not be allowed to obscure the sophistication of its technique. Like many other rural objects, it is far from being the makeshift which at first sight it appears to be to minds schooled to an interpretation of progress as investment in the products of industrialization. In its own time and place it fulfilled its function perfectly, and it is hoped to show that it is not a substitute for something else but a thing which existed in its own right as an original part of Irish rural economy. If we suppose it to have been formerly in use over the whole country, one problem of Irish rural civilization down the centuries is solved: the question of where threshed grain was stored. To be assured that there is a problem at all we must, of course, be certain that the individual farmer threshed enough corn at one time to be presented with the problem of grain storage on any scale and that, if he did, he could not meet the difficulty by storing it in a barn or in the house.

In regard to the question of whether the Irish threshed in quantity or only a little at a time to meet present needs, we must not be misled by the frequent allusions to such a practice as burning corn in the straw, which was listed among the more heinous barbarities of the Irish by English propagandists for their own order of things. Even if more recent Irish and Scottish examples of the custom reveal it as a short cut through the labour of threshing and kiln-drying for the purpose of meeting immediate domestic requirements, there may be reason to suspect that in earlier times it was practised on a scale large enough to leave a considerable quantity of grain on hand for storage at one time, as the following quotation from 1623 may imply:

'They burn their oats standing upon the stalk or reeds in the fields and thereby lose the straw which might serve many good purposes.'[1]

It is possible that the framers of the Act against the custom passed in 1634–35 had a similar wholesale use in mind when they provided the following concession intended to limit the practice to the relief of pressing domestic needs:

'Provided, that in regard it many times falleth out, that in regard of the late sowing, and the coldness of the climate, the corne is long and late before it ripeneth, that it may be lawfull for the owner or owners of as much corne of any kind as shall be sowed after one plough yearly for the space of two years after the making of this act, and no longer, for his and their present relief amongst them, to burn six bartes [Irish *beart*, "a bundle"] of corne (accompting twenty ordinary shaves to the barte, and no more;) and that no corne be burnt in the straw, contrary to the true meaning of this act, after the twentieth day of October during the said two years.'[2]

[1] *Advertisements for Ireland.* Edited George O'Brien. Dublin, 1923, p. 33.   [2] 10 & 11 *Charles I*, ch. 17.

Moreover, the fact that throughout the same century Ireland continued to be a corn-exporting country[1] disposes of the theory that the crops were stored in the sheaf and threshed in small parcels as the need arose, since an export trade presupposes threshing and movement of corn in bulk from individual farms and storage facilities for considerable quantities while awaiting transport. Indeed, the very absence of barns to thresh in, which will be presently discussed, almost postulates the need for bulk threshing at the end of harvest, since the wet climate would provide a minimum of opportunities for carrying it out piecemeal over the winter and spring months in the open. It would seem, therefore, that the Irish farmer of former centuries had to face the problem of storing grain in bulk.

It is not at all certain that he had a barn in which to store it. It is true that the law tract *Crith Gablach*, dating from the beginning of the eighth century, specifies that the *ogaire* chief has a share in a barn[2] while individual ownership of one is listed among the qualifications of nobles of a higher rank.[3] But it must be remembered that persons of these grades of society were men of considerable substance and that, even taking at its face value the highly artificial stratification of rank and possessions which the text sets out, it is a fair inference that men below the rank of an *ogaire* had no barns at all. We have, of course, no information as to what the size of such barns as there were might have been, nor of the uses to which they were put. Whatever data future research may disclose about the frequency and importance of barns in early and medieval Ireland, there is a considerable amount of evidence from the seventeenth century onwards pointing to a general lack of them in the Irish countryside. The Act forbidding burning corn in the straw (1634–35) cited above opens with the following assertion:

'Whereas there is in the remote parts of this kingdome of Ireland, commonly a great dearth of cattell yearly, which for the most part happeneth by reason of the ill husbandrie and improvident care of the owners, that neither provide fodder nor stover for them in winter, nor houses to put them in extremitie of stormy cold weather, but a naturall lazie disposition possessing them, that will not build barns to house and thrash their corn in. . . .'[4]

Even in Kilkenny, a county where Anglo-Norman organization had been exceptionally long in duration and exceptionally strong, it is stated in 1800:

'Barns are sometimes entirely wanting, and corn is threshed on the ground of the yard; generally, however, the small farmers have a shed or room just large enough to permit two men to use their flails.'[5]

[1] O'Brien, George. *The Economic History of Ireland in the Seventeenth Century*, Dublin and London, 1919, p. 145.
[2] *Laws* IV, p. 304, 305.   [3] *ibid.*, pp. 308; 309, 310, 311.
[4] 10 & 11 *Charles I*, ch. 17.
[5] Tighe, William. *Statistical Observations relative to the County of Kilkenny*, Dublin, 1802, p. 215.

The same writer, discussing the farmhouses, reverts to this again:

'... but the greatest failing is in the offices: the barn is generally a shed to thresh on (*sic*), with no floor, but the natural soil; ...'[1]

In 1806 it is said that this lack of barns is as characteristic of the house of the farmer 'renting three or four hundred pounds a year' as it is of the man renting a small farm of 'from eight to ten guineas a year'.[2]

Of County Cork in 1810 it is stated:

'Barns are never used here for any other purpose than threshing in, and, of course, are much less capacious than the English. .... The common farmer is often un-provided with either stage or barn. He makes his stacks on the ground near his house, and, as the weather permits, threshes his corn in the open air upon some dry spot, frequently the public road.'[3]

Of Ireland in general it is stated in 1812:

'Barns. I know of no buildings in Ireland similar to the numerous ones of this kind, every where found in England.'[4]

A generalization about the country in 1818 runs:

'The appendage of a barn is a convenience very seldom enjoyed by the Irish farmer; the hard naked highway furnishes the floor on which his grain is threshed.'[5]

A report from County Roscommon in 1832 states:

'As for barns, in the English and continental acceptation of the term, they are literally unknown. The floor of some outhouse, or perhaps even that of the family room, may be used for threshing; but a vast proportion of the grain is beaten out in the open air, very commonly near the road side, where there happens to be a dry spot. These observations, it must be understood, apply to the small holdings; but upon such is raised a considerable quantity of the corn which is thrown into the market from the county of Roscommon.'[6]

As late as 1847 the practice of threshing corn on the roads reported from many districts is adduced as evidence for the lack of barns and out-offices in the country in general.[7]

Admittedly, some of these citations come from very critical observers concerned to paint the Irish scene in sombre hues, and admittedly, too, conditions must have varied more considerably between one region and another than the general deprecatory tone of our sources seems to allow, but, even taking this into account, the general impression is inescapable that the barn 'in the English and continental acceptation of the term' did not exist. If this impression is correct we must look for an alternative method for the bulk storage of threshed corn.

[1] Tighe, William. *Statistical Observations relative to the County of Kilkenny*, Dublin, 1802, pp. 411-12.
[2] Colt Hoare, Sir Richard. *Journal of a Tour in Ireland, A.D. 1806*, London, 1807, p. 306.
[3] Townsend, Rev. Horatio. *Statistical Survey of the County of Cork*, Dublin, 1810, p. 214.
[4] Wakefield, Edward. *An Account of Ireland Statistical and Political*, London, 1812, vol. I, p. 468.
[5] Curwen, J. C. *Observations on the State of Ireland*, London, 1818, p. 105.
[6] Weld, Isaac. *Statistical Survey of the County of Roscommon*, Dublin, 1832, p. 655.
[7] *Devon Report, Digest of Evidence*, Dublin, 1847, vol. I, p. 128.

One alternative to be considered is that it was stored in the dwelling-house itself. Data—archaeological, descriptive and pictorial—on the Irish house from early Christian times down to the eighteenth century are astonishingly exiguous, but what there are do not suggest that it was ever of more than relatively modest dimensions. There is general agreement that in early times the typical dwelling was a post-and-wattle structure, and there is every reason to believe that this construction survived well into the seventeenth century in those parts of the country where enough natural woodland remained to furnish the building materials.[1] There is also some evidence which suggests that in some parts of the country at least, and perhaps under social conditions unhinged by military cam-paigns, the general type of dwelling was flimsy and impermanent.[2] Neither this kind of house nor the more substantial but still small kind general in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would, on considera-tions of floor space alone, afford much room for the storage of corn. It is improbable that the former was provided with lofts which could have been used for the purpose, and where the latter was they were utilized as sleeping quarters or for the storage of household and minor farm gear and commodities like wool. Moreover, in the winter season, at the very time when the necessity for corn storage would arise, some of the floor space would have to be given up to the milch cattle which here, as in many other parts of Europe, were housed in the dwelling at night, in, at least, some districts of the country. On the whole, therefore, it does not seem likely that the house could, to any great extent, have been utilized for the storage of any considerable quantities of grain.

As we have seen, a problem of storage must have existed which since it does not, according to the available evidence, seem to have been met by the provision of barns or extra space in the house, must have been solved by the use of a granary of this or some allied type. If this is the case we must regard the west Cork examples as the last survivors of a thing which was once in widespread use over the greater part of the country. In this there is a curious parallelism with the hooded cloak, formerly the universal outer garment of Irish women, which is now only to be found in a few places in the same area.[3] But whereas it is possible to discover the former distribution of the cloak from abundant literary references, there is, to the writer's present knowledge, not a single one to the existence of the granary outside its present area and none to it within that area which antedates

[1] Lucas, A. T. Wattle and Straw Mat Doors in Ireland. Publication forthcoming in Åke Campbell Festskrift, Upsala.
[2] e.g. *Calendar State Papers, Ireland,* 1598-99, p. 396.
Davis, Sir John. *A Discoverie of the State of Ireland,* 1613, reprinted in *A Collection of Tracts and Treatises,* Dublin, 1860, vol. I, p. 667.
10 & 11 *Charles I,* ch. 17.
[3] Lucas, A. T. *Journal Cork Historical and Archaeological Society,* vol. LVI (1951), pp. 104-19.

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the present century. The contrast is, however, not so anomalous as might at first appear, for so distinctive a garment as the cloak would naturally catch the eye of a tourist, who would take no interest whatever in the granary, even if he saw it. The chances that he would have seen the latter were, indeed, remote, for he would have departed for home before the season for its erection and it would have been dismantled before he arrived to begin his summer travels in the country. Furthermore, it is very doubtful if a stranger, even if specifically interested in agricultural methods, seeing it, would have recognized it for what it was, for at a little distance it could easily have been mistaken for a small corn stack. It may be thought surprising that none of the authors of the statistical agricultural county surveys sponsored by the Dublin Society in the early decades of the nineteenth century mentions it if it were in existence anywhere in the country outside Cork at that period, but this becomes less so when we find that Townsend, the writer of the Cork survey, which is one of the most detailed of the series, does not refer to it either, although it cannot conceivably be supposed to have been introduced into that county from outside since the date of the survey, 1810, and to have had a whole distinctive terminology of Irish words invented for it in the meantime. It may well, of course, have been extinct over the greater part of the country long prior to the time of these surveys; and it is possible that its disappearance began with the gradual decline in the consumption of cereal food following the introduction of the potato in the seventeenth century and its ever increasing importance as the staple of diet in the ensuing years.

There are two fragments of inconclusive evidence for the existence of the granary in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. One of these occurs in a map made by a soldier named John Thomas to illustrate the capture of Enniskillen Castle on the Erne by the English from Maguire in 1593.[1] The map is embellished with pictures of the castle, the combatant forces, the houses in the area, and topographical details. On a small island in the middle of the river there are depicted four indubitably native houses with, adjoining them, five yellow cylindrical objects with steep conical caps. The obvious interpretation of these is that they are intended to represent corn stacks, and in the absence of any other we might rest satisfied with it, but they present certain features which suggest that they may, possibly, be granaries of the type we have been discussing. In the first place, if we may take the relative proportions as being approximately correct, the houses are, in comparison with the adjoining castle, very modest structures, so that the objects in question, by comparison with the houses, must, in turn, be gauged as very small for corn stacks, so diminutive, in fact, that it is difficult to understand what useful quantity of corn

[1] British Museum: Augustus I (ii), 39.

in the sheaf could be stored in stacks of their size. And the map, it must be remembered, dates from a time when there is ample evidence of the great importance of corn to the Irish people and of the great quantities which were cultivated. The systematic destruction of this corn was a main object of English policy in the war which raged at the period, and the contemporary state papers teem with jubilant accounts of its wholesale ruin. Typical of these is a report from Sir Richard Bingham to Walsyngham describing his expedition into Mayo in 1590:

> 'We spent 16 days in Tyrawley spoiling the country and putting the people to the sword. . . . We took 2,000 cows and 300 head of great cattle, and burned 1,200 ricks of corn, besides the havoc of all things else.'[1]

Even more germane is another report from the same person to the Lord Deputy in 1593, since it describes an action into the very territory where the scene of our map is laid:

> 'Those which I sent into the Brenny burnt great store of corn there, and went up to within Mynterfoddaine (parcel of Maguire's country), where they burnt much corn also and wasted the same all along from Clanarne. . . .'[2]

Perhaps more significant still is the following from 'A description of Lough Foyle and the country adjoining', dated 1600:

> 'It [Lough Swilly] hath in it also an island called the Inch, passable at low water from O'Dogherty's side. It is near two miles long and a mile broad. It has in it between four and five hundred Irish houses. It was a magazine for O'Dogherty's corn, and was now burned and spoiled by the garrison of Derry. . . .'[3]

In connection with the last extract it is to be noted that while there are several other 'Irish houses' depicted on the mainland of the map, not one of them is neighboured by the cylindrical structures to be seen alongside those on the island. The conclusion seems to be that this island, too, was a 'magazine' for corn and that the structures are the granaries in which it was stored. If the corn from O'Doherty's chiefry was transported to Inch island for safe keeping, it is unthinkable that it was moved in the straw, and it is, similarly, incredible that it would have been brought over to this small river island in the straw either, when, with infinitely less bulk to contend with, it could have been threshed and carried over in bags by the dug-out canoes, several of which are shown on the map being paddled by the Irish. Indeed, even if the Irish had not been accustomed to thresh their corn in quantity, the circumstances of the time would have forced the practice on them to lessen, even by a little, the risk of its total loss by being burned in the rick. In corroboration of this we find Sir J. Norrys stating in 1595, when reporting about Tyrone's country: 'The rebels bury

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[1] *Calendar State Papers, Ireland*, 1588-92, p. 329.
[2] *Calendar State Papers, Ireland*, 1592-96, pp. 161-2.
[3] *Calendar State Papers, Ireland*, 1600-1601, p. 94.

their oats as soon as they cut them',[1] a mode of concealment which pre-supposes threshed corn. All these things considered, and taking into account also their yellow colour and their undoubted similarity to the Cork *fóir*, there are good grounds for believing that the cylindrical objects with the conical caps on the island are granaries of the same type.

The second fragment of old evidence for the existence of the granary comes from the end of the seventeenth century and is to be found in both of the two versions in the National Library of Ireland of Thomas Phillips's military survey of Ireland which dates from 1685. In a wash drawing entitled 'A Prospect of the New Fort built at Kinsale' there appear in the right foreground the hip roofs of three thatched houses, the walls of which are hidden by rising ground between. It is a fairly safe conclusion that these represent houses of a native type and they stand in striking contrast with a house of indisputably English type which adjoins them in the 'Prospect'. On the ground lying between these houses and the fort are two enigmatic objects. They are cylindrical in shape and appear to be hollow and built of superimposed rings. They stand close together and one is slightly larger than the other (Plate IV). Well-heads might suggest themselves as an interpretation, but they show no trace of stonework, and certainly do not seem to be made of wood. It would, besides, be highly improbable to find two wells side by side like this. One possible inter-pretation is that they are the remains of two dismantled granaries of the *fóir* type from which the grain has been drawn and of which only the few lower rings remain. In modern instances the clearance of the grain is, sometimes, not as thorough as previously described, the lower rings being left standing, and these have been known to remain intact from spring to the following autumn, until finally removed to make room for a new granary on the same spot. Some additional probability is lent to this interpretation by the fact that the picture comes from an area adjoining the present district of the granary.

If these two identifications can be regarded as established, the former existence of the granary outside its present bounds and its presence in Ireland in late medieval times must be regarded as established too. Even if we choose to doubt them there is still good reason for believing that it has a lineage stretching back directly into the country's prehistory.

[1] *Calendar State Papers, Ireland*, 1592-1596, p. 372.

Hebridean Traditions

C. I. MacLean

IN writing of Hebridean traditions we shall deal mainly with the Outer Hebrides, the chain of islands one hundred and nineteen miles long which runs parallel to the western seaboard of Scotland. In addition to Lewis and Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist and Barra—the main islands in the chain—there are hundreds of smaller islands around the coasts and in the inlets of sea that separate the larger islands. Reference will be made to some of the islands in the Inner Hebrides group.

With the exception of the Orkney and Shetland Isles, no part of Scotland shows such pronounced traces of Scandinavian settlement and affinities as the Hebrides. The Vikings made their appearance on the west of Scotland in A.D. 802, when they sacked the monastic centre of Iona. By the year A.D. 880 the Hebrides were added to the crown of Norway. They were thus under Norse rule until 1266, when as a result of the Battle of Largs they were ceded to the crown of Scotland. From then onwards a slow process of Gaelicization must have set in. To-day the Outer Hebrides are a purely Gaelic-speaking area with a predominantly Norse place-name nomenclature. The ratio of Norse to Gaelic names is in places four to one. All important settlements and geographical features have Norse names. There is an almost complete absence of old Gaelic names. Most of them are recent and in many places have displaced earlier Norse names. The process of Gaelicizing Norse names continues to-day. The highest hill in South Uist bears to-day the name Ben More. Old informants state that the proper name of the hill is Geideabhal; the neighbouring hill is called Hecla. In a generation or so the old Norse name will be forgotten. More Norse words survive in the dialect of the Hebrides than in that of the mainland districts. Barra fishermen still call the Atlantic the Haf. Everywhere local historical tradition recalls the period of Norse settlement. In almost every Hebridean island there is a prince from Lochlann buried, or the men of Lochlann left hidden treasure. A tradition-bearer from South Uist stated that during the Viking period, Norse traders came in summer to the Hebrides and bought up the fish caught and cured during winter

by the islesmen. To facilitate transport they built a canal through the southern part of the island. Local tradition still points out the places where there were apparently lock-gates. He went on to state: 'The Vikings were honest men, but when those murderers and pilferers from whom the people in the islands to-day are descended made their appearance, the poor Vikings had to return to Norway.' The earliest Gaelic name for the Outer Hebrides is Innse Gall, the Islands of the Strangers—the strangers being the folk of Lochlann.

The Outer Hebrides are bounded on the west by interminable stretches of white sand, which, as one goes inland, gives place to low-lying sandy soil studded everywhere with lakes and inlets of the sea. There are calculated to be 1,500 lakes in the Outer Hebrides, covering an extent of 50,000 acres. The low-lying sandy plains are called 'machaire'. This is the fertile, arable land of the Hebrides. As one goes eastwards the 'machaire' gives place to bog and peat-land, which rises gradually to heights of almost 2,000 feet in places and descends abruptly to a rock-bound eastern coast, where there is less arable land. Among the hills and along the river valleys are green patches of good pasture. Here the cattle are sent in summer to the sheiling. Young girls live in the sheiling huts, tend the cattle, and milk them and make butter. In Lewis this is still a common practice. In most of the other islands it ceased fifty years ago.

In most of the islands the western shores support the bulk of the population, especially the farming or crofting population. There are no harbours or safe anchorages on the west. The fishing communities are thus found on the eastern shores.

The land is windswept and bare, and apart from a few sheltered places on the eastern coasts, is devoid of trees. In the peat-bogs are still found the charred remains of a primeval forest — bog pine (*giuthas blair*). Oral tradition explains this phenomenon: the woods in the Outer Hebrides were burned down on the orders of a Norwegian princess because she was forsaken by a prince of Lewis who in preference married a native girl.

The Outer Hebrides support a population of over 35,000 people. Life there is a grim struggle against unfavourable forces, notably adverse climatic conditions and the lack of good arable land. The larger part of the population consists of small farmers or crofters, who have supplementary sources of livelihood such as fishing—white fishing and herring, lobster fishing particularly on the eastern shores, whelk and cockle gathering for export as well as domestic use, seaweed and tangle gathering for commercial purposes, and, in Lewis and Harris especially, hand-loom weaving. A very great number of the men are seafaring, and several thousand Hebrideans serve in the British Mercantile Marine. The popula-

tion remains fairly static despite attempts to foster emigration. In some areas it has increased within recent years. While in other parts of Scotland the drift is to the towns and industrial centres, the Hebridean will, if at all possible, remain where he is. As a merchant-seaman he travels all over the globe, but invariably returns to spend the evening of his days in the Hebrides.

If we review the social and economic history of the Hebrides during the past century and a half, we find that it falls into three periods—a period of comparative prosperity from 1800 to 1840; a second period of poverty and distress lasting right up to 1886, when, as a result of the findings of a Royal Commission, the crofters were granted security of tenure and more land was divided up into small holdings; a third period of amelioration, modernization and Anglicization.

From 1890 there have been many attempts to make the crofter's lot a happier one. Very often the attempts were misguided. Housing conditions have improved. The common grazings taken from the crofters in 1850 have been restored. Prior to 1850 all the landed proprietors were of the same blood and race as the Hebrideans themselves. They spoke the same language and were of the same faith. There was thus a traditional bond between landlord and tenant. The disastrous outcome of the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 hastened the downfall of the aristocratic Hebridean families. By 1850 almost all the Hebrides had fallen into the hands of alien, absentee landlords, who had no interest in the common people apart from exploiting them. Thus was ushered in the dark period known as the 'Clearances' or 'Evictions'.

The absentee landlords sublet the land to sheep-farmers or 'tacksmen', who deprived the crofters of their common grazings, cleared them off the best land and crowded them into the poorest and most barren areas, confiscated their stocks, arbitrarily burned their homes over their very heads and left them to die of cold and starvation or seek refuge in crowded, insanitary, emigrant ships. Between the years 1840 and 1880, 50,000 people were cleared from the glens and islands of the west of Scotland and hundreds more were perishing from want of proper shelter, food, clothing, and sanitation. Matters had come to such a pass that in 1882 a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the conditions of the crofters. The Commission's report was published in the following year and disclosed, as has been said, 'a state of misery, of wrong-doing, and of patient long-suffering without parallel in the history of the country'.

It has taken a long time to redress the ills of that dark period. The crofter can no longer be evicted from his holding; the tacksmen have gone and more and more land is being nationalized and distributed. Modern houses are being built, mostly of imported materials. The traditional long

'black house' is gradually disappearing. Prior to 1890 the 'black house' was common to all the Hebridean islands. The fire was on a flagstone in the centre of the floor. The smoke found its way out through a hole in the thatch. The thatched houses with chimneys at the gable end are comparatively recent. In the old 'black house' the cattle shared the same roof as the occupants. The long houses were generally built on a slope and the cattle were housed in the lower end. One very important change is that modern methods of cultivation have been introduced and farming implements mechanized. Tractors have in many places displaced the horse-plough, not to speak of the 'foot-plough' which is still used in many districts. One can still see a modern tractor and the old 'foot-plough' in use in practically the same township.

In the Hebrides traditions are surprisingly tenacious. The Hebridean has observed that land tilled by the 'foot-plough', *cas chrom*, yields a much better crop than land tilled by horse-plough or mechanical tractor. The old-fashioned 'black house' was much better adapted to climatic conditions in the Hebrides than the modern houses built as a result of governmental planning.

English is the sole official language—the language of governmental forms and documents and all public notices as well as the sole medium of instruction in every school. Nevertheless, it is still possible to spend long periods in the Hebrides and not hear any English spoken. It is still a foreign language to Hebrideans, and it is, as they say, 'not natural for them to talk English'. All the newspapers they read are printed in English, but the items of news are discussed in Gaelic.

Tradition still plays an important part in the conduct of funerals and the celebration of marriages. Apart from the fact that the house-visiting (*céilidh*) no longer plays so important a part as it did, social and cultural life remains the same. As a consequence of the religious revival in the early part of last century, music and dancing were frowned upon by the clergy in many places, but that phase has now passed. We are by no means at the deathbed of a tradition. One of the finest players of pibroch, the classical music of the bagpipe, is Rona Macdonald of South Uist, a young girl of fifteen; one of the very finest of Hebridean folk-singers is Flora MacNeil of Barra, a young lady of twenty-five, and in certain places schoolboys can still recite the heroic lays of the Fingalians and their fights with the Vikings. Traditional country dances are still much more popular than modern ballroom dances, folk-songs still hold the fort against songs popularized by Hollywood and the British Broadcasting Corporation's Light Programme, traditional pipe-tunes are still in no danger of being superseded by jazz. In practically every home on the island of South Uist there is at least one person able to play a bagpipe or practice chanter.

But even as early as 1860, the first investigators of folk-traditions in the Hebrides reported a gradual decay and predicted the inevitable disappearance of all traditions.

In the summer of 1859 John Francis Campbell of Islay (1822–85) visited the Outer Hebrides and there recorded many folk tales. Campbell belonged to one of the aristocratic Gaelic families and spoke Gaelic. He was thus able to establish direct and intimate contact with his informants. The inspiration came to Campbell indirectly from the work of the Norwegian collectors, Asbjørnsen and Moe. It was the translation of *Popular Tales from the Norse* by the English folklorist, G. W. Dasent, that first suggested to John Francis Campbell the collection of folk tales in Scotland. Dasent encouraged and advised Campbell to set to in the Western Highlands and Islands. He was ably helped by people from varied walks of life. His most noted collectors were Hector Maclean, a schoolmaster from Islay; Hector Urquhart, a gamekeeper from Poolewe, Ross-shire; and others such as John Dewar of Arrochar, a maker of fences. Campbell and his collaborators collected about a thousand tales. The main part of the collection came from the Outer Hebrides, especially the islands of South Uist and Barra.

Campbell gives an account of the practice of storytelling in the Hebrides:

'Men and women of all ages could and did tell me stories, children of all ages listened to them; and it was self-evident that the people generally knew and enjoyed them. Elsewhere I had been told, that thirty or forty years ago, men used to congregate and tell stories; here I was told, that they now spend whole winter nights about the fire listening to these old world tales. The clergy, in some places, had condemned the practice, and there it had fallen into disuse; stories seemed to be almost exterminated in some islands, though I believe they were only buried alive, but in other places this harmless amusement is not forbidden; and there, in every cluster of houses, is some one man famed as "good at sgeulachdan", whose house is a winter evening's resort. I visited these, and listened, often with wonder, at the extraordinary power of memory shown by untaught old men.'

Another collector arrived in the Hebrides about the year 1865. He was Alexander Carmichael (1832–1912), a Customs and Excise officer. Carmichael's work brought him in touch with hundreds of tradition-bearers. He resided permanently in the Hebrides until 1882, and continued his visits there for almost a space of thirty years. He was especially interested in charms, incantations and prayers, of which four volumes, entitled *Carmina Gadelica*, have been published and a fifth volume is in preparation. Carmichael, however, noted down much valuable information about beliefs and festival customs, grazing and tillage customs, agricultural methods, field monuments, legends and tales, and left many notes about story-tellers and tradition-bearers of the last half of the century. In the Hebrides Carmichael and John Francis Campbell met and together visited

some of the noted story-tellers. Carmichael has much to say of the practice of story-telling at the 'céilidh'. He refers to scores of story-tellers in the Hebrides and on the Scottish mainland. In many cases he speaks of tradition-bearers, 'whose lore would have filled volumes, but it died with them'. There are some graphic descriptions of tradition-bearers Carmichael met, and he tells of their work and the way they passed their lives. Let us cite one example:

> 'In October 1871, the late J. F. Campbell of Islay and the writer were storm-stayed in the precipitous island of Miunghlaidh, Barra. We occupied our time in listening to the folklore of the people by whom we were so kindly treated. One of these was Roderick MacNeill, known as Ruaraidh mac Dhomhnuil, Roderick the son of Donald, a famous story-teller and a man wondrously endowed mentally and physically. MacNeill was then ninety-two years of age. He had never been ill, and never had shoes on, and never had tasted tea. His chest was as round as a barrel, and measured forty-eight inches in circumference. He had been an extraordinary "rocker" after birds, moving about on precipices of eight hundred feet sheer down to the sea, where a goat or even a cat might hesitate to go. So powerful was the man that wherever his fingers could get insertion in the crevices of the rock he could move his body along the face of the precipice without any other support.'

In September 1946, I knew that there was at least one story-teller still living in Barra. His name was Seumas MacKinnon, and one of his tales had been published. I was given to understand that this was the only tale recorded from him. A good story-teller is never limited to one single tale. In Ireland I had never met a story-teller who had only one tale. I did not expect something out of the ordinary in Barra.

I shall long remember the evening I first went to visit Seumas MacKinnon. I had been in Barra for a week before I located his house. It is a small but solidly built, modern, stone house by the wayside, just where the road dips down towards Northbay, an inlet of the sea on the island's eastern coast. For any folklore collector the crucial time is when contact is first made with the tradition-bearer. To Seumas MacKinnon I was a complete stranger, and much depended on the outcome of our first meeting. Every folklore collector must be prepared to efface himself and approach even the most humble tradition-bearer with the deference due to the high and exalted. Seumas MacKinnon was an old man; I was a young man. He was busy repairing shoes when I entered the kitchen of his house. He raised a pair of mischievous eyes to greet me. 'You have the Gaelic in any case,' said he, 'and you are welcome. Far too many English-speaking beasts come this way now.' The first barrier had been swept aside. Hebrideans nowadays always assume that the stranger is always English-speaking. I had taken the old man by surprise. I noticed that he was a very tall man. His face was weather-beaten and his features were beautifully chiselled. He wore the blue-peaked cap of fishermen and

blue dungarees. The life of eighty years had been spent as much on sea as on land. At eighty he was still a very handsome old man. We sat and spoke for some time. Eventually I told him I had come to Barra to look for old stories.

'Oh!' said he, 'it is a long time since I told a story. People have no use for story-telling now.'

That night he did tell me a very fine story, the story of the three noble acts, a well-known international folk tale. It was a story within a story and was told to a group of three men, each one of whom accused the others of robbery. The characters who performed the noble acts were a grieve, a nobleman and a robber. The listeners, having heard of the noble acts, were asked whose act was the noblest. The person who considered the robber's act the noblest was found to be the thief in the case at issue. 'It began with robbery and with robbery it ends.'

Seumas MacKinnon is a very fine story-teller. He was the first practised story-teller I had heard in Scotland. His diction was crisp, concise and clear. Every sentence was short and perfectly balanced. His style was, of course, that of the real traditional Gaelic story-teller. By modulation of tone and gesture he brought considerable dramatization to bear on his telling of a tale. He acted the part of the characters and showed that he had mastered an art that had taken centuries to develop. His voice was beautifully clear and pleasing. He stamped his own personality on every story he told, and his lively sense of humour enhanced his story-telling considerably. His aim was to delight and entertain, and he certainly did both. I used an Ediphone dictating machine to record his stories. The neighbours usually crowded in to hear him recording his stories. Most of the young people did not know that Seumas could and did tell stories. The company was a mixed one, but that did not deter him from telling whatever stories he chose. He had some very diverting versions of noted international tales, but they were always told with such consummate artistry that their Rabelaisian character was obscured. I doubt very much if Seumas MacKinnon ever heard of Victorianism or the 'Celtic Twilight' for that matter. Nevertheless, he is one of Nature's noblemen.

Seumas MacKinnon is, however, very conscious of the change that has come about. Stories are no longer so much in demand wherever people foregather. The 'céilidh' has gone in any case. It was so different over sixty years ago, when he was a youth. When he lived in the township of Earsary on the eastern shore of Barra, every evening in winter, when his day's work was done, he and a number of other young men visited the house of old, bedridden Roderick Macdonald. The house was a long 'black house'. The fire was on a flagstone in the centre of the floor. Beyond there was a dividing-wall of stone that shut off the sleeping

quarters from the living room. Every evening, when the visitors arrived
—and invariably they were the same visitors—the mattress on which the
old man lay was carried down and placed beside the fire in the living-room.
'Lift me up now, dear and beloved ones,' the old man would say to the
young men. When propped up into a comfortable position, the old man
told tales and continued until it was time for the visitors to depart. 'There
is nothing like that to-day,' said Seumas MacKinnon. 'To-day there is
only Death.' The old traditional way of life was passing.

It was in the house of old Roderick Macdonald that Seumas MacKinnon
learned the tales we recorded during my stay in Barra. Stories which he
heard in later life did not cling so tenaciously to his memory. His memory
bridged, as it were, a span of over sixty years.

When Seumas MacKinnon grew to manhood and began to go to the
herring fishing, he found that aboard the fishing smacks good story-tellers
got an appreciative audience. At that time Barra fishermen went as far
afield as the Faroes and the south-western coast of Ireland. At that time,
too, they often went from the Hebrides and walked across Scotland to the
Aberdeenshire coast and were hired for the season as hands on fishing
drifters. Over fifty years ago the inlets on the west coast of Skye were
excellent fishing grounds. Boats from different islands as well as places
further afield congregated there. When night fell and the nets were set,
fishermen paid visits to each other's boats. If there was a good story-teller
in any boat, he was assured of many visitors. Seumas MacKinnon tells
that one night he was one of a party listening to another Barra story-teller.
They were below deck in the story-teller's smack. It was early of a winter's
evening that he commenced story-telling. All night long he continued.
The listeners were oblivious of everything except the story that was being
narrated. All of a sudden they heard a series of loud bangs on the deck
above. They looked up and dawn had long broken. Their smack had
dragged its anchors and was drifting perilously near a rocky shore. The crew
of a drifter, which had come alongside, were throwing lumps of coal on to
the deck of the smack to warn the men below that danger was imminent.

Seumas MacKinnon was never at school. He can neither read nor
write. He knows little or no English. His only school was in the 'black
house' of old, bedridden Roderick Macdonald. It took me five months
to record what he learned there, but I could well be recording from him
still. I re-visited him in 1950. I expected to find him bedridden. On the
contrary, I found him behind his house on a bright, cold December day,
levering a boulder of rock weighing half a ton. He was building an
extension to his house. I recorded more tales from him in March last.
He was then resting after a day's work planting potatoes. He is now
eighty-eight years of age.

In Barra there are other good story-tellers. Over fifty years ago there were two famous story-tellers in Glen, Castlebay, Barra. They had schools of story-telling, i.e. they told stories to regular visitors, mostly young men. Several stories were recorded from Neil Gillies and Neil MacNeil, two Castlebay crofter-fishermen. They went as young men to listen to the story-telling of Roderick, son of Roderick More MacNeil. Roderick MacNeil apparently had a colossal repertoire of tales. Neil Gillies went to listen to his story-telling almost every winter's night for a space of fifteen years and maintains that he hardly ever heard the same tale told twice. In a nearby house another story-teller, John Roy Campbell, had his school. He told tales to a totally different crowd of young people. In western Scotland then, as in parts of western Ireland to-day, the 'céilidh'—house-visiting—played a very important part in the social life of the community. The visitors went always to the same houses night after night, year after year, sat in the same places around the fire, and left at the same time. This was all done with an almost amazing regularity. Neil Gillies, for instance, went to the house of Roderick MacNeil for a space of fifteen years.

Another factor led to the formation of these schools. In Barra it was the custom fifty years ago for young boys to go in groups from house to house in the townships on New Year's Eve and chant heroic lays. In return for chanting lays they were given presents of cakes or small sums of money in every house. All the young boys had to participate in this, and, of course, had to learn the lays (*duain*). That they did from the story-tellers and tradition-bearers. When they grew too old to go around chanting lays, they still continued to visit the tradition-bearers who taught the lays. Thus they became enrolled, as it were, in the schools of story-telling. Most of the story-tellers know the heroic lays.

In the summer of 1946 vague rumours reached me about a remarkable story-teller in the island of Benbecula, the central island in the Outer Hebrides group. This story-teller had tales which took not hours but several nights to tell. I did not quite believe that at the time. I decided to make sure, and arrived in Benbecula one bright, windy day in March 1947. Right in the centre of the island, in a township called Griminish, I found Angus MacMillan. He was then, and still is, a powerfully-built, very tall man. He was beginning to stoop slightly, but still stood at well over six feet. He seemed rather shy at first but that shyness soon disappeared. Angus has a gay, hearty laugh and, of course, a lively sense of humour. I noticed that his head was rather small for so massive a frame, and his forehead receded slightly from above a pair of deep brown eyes. A month before that, I was told, he had fallen and broken a rib. He seemed to have recovered rather quickly. He started off that day by chanting a heroic lay dating back to the Viking times, the lay of the one-

footed smith from Lochlann who enticed the Fingalians to his smithy in order to stab them. I had not heard the traditional chanting of heroic lays before.

Of course, Angus had stories. He had, as he himself said, ' a' Chriosdachd de sgeulachdan', the whole Christendom of stories. No one had ever recorded anything from him. It was high time someone started. I told him I would be back again within three weeks and would bring a recording machine. Angus had never seen one. Since then his tales have been recorded with almost every conceivable type of modern machine and also broadcast on more than one occasion. The day of my first visit to Angus's house I met Mary Ann, his sister. She was a small but very dignified old lady. She had tales, songs, prayers, and every kind of lore.

Long before that, Angus MacMillan's story-telling had become a legend in that community. Often on dark winter nights in Benbecula search parties were organized to find missing persons. The search invariably ended in some house to which Angus had come in the early evening and commenced story-telling. In the small hours of the morning the story was still being told. The listeners had forgotten about returning home and were posted as missing. Angus is now eighty years of age. He is a retired crofter. He can neither read nor write and knows no English. He spent several years at school, but does not seem to remember what he learned there. He ended his schooldays by thrashing the schoolmaster. Not only is Angus a fine story-teller but also a very remarkable character. His life story has been recorded in full, and his feats of strength, his daring, his escapades and his miraculous escapes from drowning while crossing the dangerous fords separating Benbecula from the two neighbouring islands, make the story of his life as exciting as any tale recorded from him. An Ediphone machine was used to record his material. It would have been impossible otherwise to have obtained full texts. Some of his longer romantic tales took from seven to nine hours to narrate. Even a wonder tale such as the Blood-brothers' tale took three and a half hours to tell. Lists were made of the items to be recorded. Fresh items were continually added, and it was almost impossible to keep the transcription of material apace with the accumulation of records. The transcription was, of course, nothing but the purest drudgery.

Angus would sometimes continue story-telling for eight hours on a stretch, stopping only for very short intervals to smoke or eat. He never seemed to tire. He understood and appreciated our purpose in recording and having his tales transferred to paper before it became too late. It often did seem that it would be a race against time. Although very strong and healthy otherwise, he was subject to very violent heart-attacks, which weakened him considerably and sometimes made recording impossible for

weeks. Sometimes he recovered instantly. During his periods of illness his memory became clearer than usual, and he recalled many tales and legends, some of which he had heard only once. If he heard a tale once and retold it after the first hearing, he retained it all his life. Sometimes he told tales he had heard only once, fifty years before.

In Angus's family there had been a tradition of story-telling. His father, Calum MacMillan, who died in 1917, was in his day a noted story-teller. Angus maintains that he does not have even a third of the tales his father had. About the year 1850 there arrived in South Uist an itinerant dancing-master named Ewen MacLachlan. He was also a noted story-teller. In South Uist he met Calum MacMillan. When MacLachlan decided to go to Benbecula and hold a dancing-school there, he went to live in Mac-Millan's house. Such a guest as an itinerant dancing-master, who as well had a large repertoire of tales, would have been welcome in any house in the Hebrides. In that little house in Griminish, Calum MacMillan learned most of the tales he knew and later passed on to his son. MacLachlan stayed with MacMillan for the greater part of a winter, and in the evenings on his return from the dancing classes told tales well into the night.

Thirty years later, when Angus MacMillan was growing to manhood, the boys and young men of Griminish gathered in that same house during the long winter nights. Calum MacMillan usually spent the time twisting heather ropes, 'siomain fraoich'. The twisted rope he coiled on the floor around his legs. Angus and the other men supplied him with heather as he worked. While thus engaged, Calum MacMillan told tales. When the hour of ten approached, a three-legged pot of potatoes was hung over the fire for the family's supper. When the potatoes began to boil and the water streamed down the legs of the pot, the visitors then knew that it was time to go. The tale was then stopped to be continued the following night.

To Angus MacMillan, fairy princesses, five-headed giants, enchanted princes, the sons of the King of Greece, Lochlann, the Land of Light or the Green Isle at the World's End were as real and living as his next-door neighbours. I spent the best part of three years in Benbecula engaged mainly in recording and transcribing Angus's tales. I can still see his massive figure in the lighted doorway of his house bidding me good night as I disappear into the darkness with the rain and spindrift of the Atlantic lashing in my face. 'Come early to-morrow night,' he would say, 'and perhaps we will finish that story. I remembered another long one last night.'

The greatest stylist among Gaelic story-tellers is Duncan Macdonald,[1]

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[1] We regret to state that both Angus MacMillan of Benbecula and Duncan Macdonald of South Uist have died since the time this paper was written. Angus MacMillan died on the 17th May, 1954, and Duncan Macdonald on the 7th June, 1954. R.I.P.

Peninerine, South Uist. He belongs to a family of hereditary bards to the Macdonalds of Skye. His people have been poets and story-tellers for generations. His great-grandfather, John, son of Donald, son of Norman, was in his day a noted story-teller. Duncan Macdonald reads and writes both Gaelic and English. He taught himself to read and write Gaelic. He is the reciter of heroic tales and lays. He tells stories perpetually and is now a master of the art. His command of language is magnificent and some of his tales are highly ornamented. They are full of 'runs' or descriptive prose passages in stereotyped form. Every 'run' is used in its appropriate connection, and may occur in any number of tales completely unrelated otherwise. The diction of the 'runs' is archaic. Common 'runs' depict fights or sea voyages.

Duncan Macdonald maintains that the disappearance of the 'black house' was one of the very important factors leading to the decay of story-telling and the 'céilidh' in his district. The old 'black houses' with the fire in the centre of the living-room could accommodate more people than the modern houses or even thatched houses with hearths at the gable end. In the old 'black house' they had the proper, accepted traditional setting. In the new houses the same atmosphere was lacking. Twenty or so people could not all get round the fire at the gable end. The change from the old 'black house' was the first important departure from tradition.

As far as can be judged, there is no conscious effort on the part of the aged to teach tales to the young. The young learn merely by listening to the story-tellers. It is difficult to ascertain to what extent tales are known among young people, because they never tell stories in the presence of older people. A few years before my arrival in Benbecula, one of the noted story-tellers was a young man slightly over thirty years of age. He died about ten years ago. The grandchildren of some of the story-tellers I have mentioned all listen to the tales, sometimes very intently. I have often heard Angus MacMillan's grandson even at the age of five asking the old man to tell a story, sometimes to tell such and such a story.

There are strict rules of etiquette regarding the telling of tales. When a stranger visits a house, the goodman tells the first tale. The stranger has then to continue for the rest of the night. No son tells a tale to a company in the presence of his father, and no younger brother in the presence of an elder brother. Men as a rule are the story-tellers, but there were quite a number of women story-tellers too. Several of these are still remembered in Benbecula and in the other islands. In two houses in Benbecula fifty years ago old women told tales to regular visitors. Several men have recorded tales heard from old women. In a family of tradition-bearers the men have the tales, the women the songs.

For a moment let us look at the Scottish mainland. The first area I visited, when I parted with the Irish Folklore Commission and joined the Edinburgh School of Scottish Studies in 1951, was Lochaber, the wildest and most beautiful part of Scotland. I arrived there in the dead of winter and Lochaber lay white and deep in snow. There amid 'the wild Lochaber snows' I met little John Macdonald, the Bard, as he is called. This remarkable man is now seventy-eight years of age. He started work on the railway at the age of thirteen, was pensioned off at sixty-five, and has been employed daily as a roadman by the Inverness-shire County Council for the past thirteen years. I may add that even Cromwell failed to subdue the folk of Lochaber. John Macdonald has composed scores of songs. His memory is simply astounding. He seems to know everything that ever took place in Lochaber. He can give the date of almost every battle and clan fight as far back as the fifteenth century almost to the exact day and month of the year. I was in Lochaber for five months and met him once weekly. During that time the total of 524 stories came from his lips and all were recorded and transcribed. Most of his stories were short. Nevertheless, he recorded over five hundred different stories. He still has much more to tell. Only now are we beginning to discover our own country.

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Rake and Scythe-Handle Making in Bedfordshire and Suffolk

Thomas W. Bagshawe

WHILE endeavouring to reconstruct the history of a Bedfordshire craftsman whose trade had become extinct in the county, visits, for comparative purposes, were paid to a Suffolk craftsman still at the time carrying on the same class of trade, that of a rake and scythe-handle maker. This trade was usually combined with that of a turner. It was found that the general arrangements of the two workshops, the tools used, and the processes employed were similar, the principal differences being dialectal variations in the names of the tools and products.

The history of the Bedfordshire craftsman was investigated in 1948 and 1949, that of the Suffolk one in 1949 and 1950, two years before he retired from business. Opportunity was taken to photograph some of the tools and methods employed by the latter.

The Slaters of Clifton, Bedfordshire
(circa 1860–1918)

Trade directory records show that from 1823 onwards Bedfordshire rake and scythe-handle makers confined their activities to a limited area comprising Clifton, Shefford, Henlow, Meppershall, Campton and Silsoe, all in the east side of the county within easy reach of woods and incidentally in the market-gardening area of Bedfordshire. Before this date no direct references have been traced to the trade which must have been included with that of the turner to which there are many Bedfordshire references dating back to the fourteenth century.

Thomas Slater who founded the business was a 'Wood Turner and Rake Manufacturer' with his house and workshop adjoining, in Grange Street, Clifton. Nothing could be traced about his personal history except that he was born in 1824 and died in 1896. His name first appears in *Kelly's Directory* for 1864. On his death the business passed to his son Joseph, born in 1859. This son, according to his bill-head, was also of the same trade, but a daughter describes him better as an agricultural tool-

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PLATE I

CORRUGATED IRON

WOOD SHED & CHICKEN HOUSE

SAW-PIT
(1)

WOOD; PANTILE ROOF

STOCKS

STORE

TIN SHED

(16)

(2)

(3)

(LOFT ABOVE THIS SECTION)

(5)

(12)

(13)

LATHE

(14)

(15)

(17)

ENGINE HOUSE

(21)

TIN SHED

(20)

WOOD YARD

(4)

(2)

(6)

(4)

(11)

STEAM BOX

(18)

(19)

(22)

SAW BENCH

(23)

(22)

(24)

GRANGE STREET FACING

MAIN WORKSHOP

(7)

ROOF - PANTILES

(7)

WOOD YARD

SLATE ROOF

(2)

(8)

5   0   5   10   15   20

SCALE OF FEET

HOUSE

GENERAL SHED

SLATE ROOF

SLATE ROOF

HURDLE SHED

(10)

(9)

FENCE

ALL FLOORS – BEATEN EARTH

ARTIFICIAL LIGHT – OIL LAMPS

SLATER, RAKE MAKER, CLIFTON

(RECONSTRUCTION - 1948)

R. W. B.

Key to plan of premises:

1. Saw-pit.
2. Benches.
3. Stocks for bending scythe-snaths.
4. Two brakes.
5. Vice.
6. Bench for inserting teeth.
7. Double doors to admit timber waggon.
8. Fireplace and chimney.
9. Outhouse for coal.
10. Hurdle Shed.
11. Steam box or 'steamer'.
12. Morticing machine.
13. Tool cupboard.
14. Lathe.
15. Grindstone.
16. Belt drive from $2\frac{1}{2}$ H.P. engine to lathe.
17. Horizontal steam engine—$2\frac{1}{2}$ H.P.
18. Boiler.
19. Vertical steam engine—4 H.P.
20. Belt drive from 4 H.P. engine to saw-bench.
21. Small saw-bench.
22. Trolleys on wheels and rails for conveying timber to saw-bench.
23. Saw-bench or 'push-bench'.
24. Band-saw.

handle manufacturer. The business never maintained at its peak more than father and son and an extra man, with occasional help from sawyers and a hurdle-maker.

When Joseph Slater died in 1918, a year after his son, who would have succeeded him in business, was killed in the First World War, the trade became extinct in Bedfordshire. From information supplied by Joseph Slater's daughters and by a former employee, now a master builder and decorator, with a trained eye for measurements and details, it has been possible to reconstruct a plan (Plate I) of the Slaters' premises, the principal buildings of which were constructed of wood with pantile roofs and with a loft over the main workshop. They were of mid-nineteenth-century date and separate from the house. It was also possible to obtain possession of some of the trade tools and products as well as the ledgers for 1891–1903 and a day-book covering 1913–19.

The making of rakes was the Slaters' speciality, the making of scythe-handles being of less importance. The rakes were of various kinds. The commonest were hay-rakes with forked handles[1] or 'stales'[2] and heads fitted with wooden teeth. There were also hay-rakes with wire teeth and others described as 'iron rakes' or 'iron tooth rakes' having blacksmith-made teeth. Thatching rakes, offal rakes and twitch rakes were special kinds. In the haymaking season rakes were frequently brought to the shop for urgent repairs.

The Slaters also made numerous other wooden handles and tools for the agricultural community around them. 'Regular lines' found in the account-books are ash and sallow[3] scythe-handles called 'snaths', 'snathes' or 'sneaths' and the ash 'nebs' or 'nibs'[4] used with them; short and long axe helves or 'elves'[5]; beetles[6] and their stales; bill-handles; drags; dung-fork stales with and without 'eyes'[7]; fork stales; frost-pick helves (also called shafts); gathering-forks and their stales; hammer handles or stales; harrow 'drafts'[8] of various sizes; hay-knife handles; hedge-hook shafts or stales; hoe handles or stales, classified as Common, Round, Medium, Small, Carrot and Onion; knife handles; 'maddock' (i.e. mattock) helves

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[1] These were cut to a distance of twenty inches from the head and then splayed out to enter it in two places. A tin band nailed at the bottom of the slit prevented further splitting.

[2] STALE. Slaters called it a 'stale' or 'stail'. It is interesting to note that some tools are described as having handles, others as having stales, trees or shafts.

[3] SALLOW, i.e. willow.

[4] NIBS. The handles jutting out from the long shaft of a scythe. (Wright: *English Dialect Dictionary*.) There are top and bottom nibs to a scythe.

[5] HELVE. A handle of a weapon or tool. (*Oxford English Dictionary*, referred to as *O.E.D.* in subsequent references.)

[6] BEETLE. A heavy wooden mallet, often bound with iron, used for driving stakes. (Wright, *op. cit.*) Slaters called the iron bands 'rings'.

[7] EYE. A hole pierced in the handle.

[8] DRAUGHT. Whippletree, or bar, to which the harrows are attached. (J. Allen Ransome: *The Implements of Agriculture* (1863).)

(or 'elves'); pick-shafts; plough-spud[1] handles or stales; pulper[2] handles; setter[3] sticks; shovel 'trees' or handles; sledge-hammer stales, spade-trees, spud-handles[4] or stales; stone-hammer handles; tomahawk[5] handles or stales; and whippletrees or 'swaytrees'[6] classified as extra large, large, medium and small, also swelltrees.[7] There are very few references to flails, the latest reference being to a hand-staff[8] in 1914. Fence posts, rails and pales were occasionally sold.

Heavier articles made in the shop were gates, ladders and hurdles. Components of a typical paled yard gate consisted of head, 'groin',[9] rails, braces and pales. A boarded gate comprised head, 'groin', rails, braces and boards, with oak posts and sill. It seems that field-gates were only repaired. Not many ladders were made, only thirty-two in twenty-two years, mostly round[10] ladders with rounds varying in number from twelve to fifty-three usually made of wood but sometimes of iron. Hurdles of several kinds were made and described as bullock (10 ft. by 5 ft.), gate (9 ft. 6 in. long), pig (10 ft., 9 ft. and 8 ft. long), and sheep. Rollers were turned for lamb hurdles.[11] With the hurdles stakes were supplied. Cow cribs, square and round, were built from time to time as also sheep cribs, sheep troughs, pig troughs and henhouses.

Other objects supplied very occasionally were such things as dibbles; handles or stales for tools of various kinds such as augers, chisels, hammers, screwdrivers, bean hooks and shears; sheep washers (i.e. dippers) with 11-ft. handles; and milking stools.

In their capacity of wood turners the Slaters did a lot of jobbing work for the village and district around. Thus we find entries in the books for such varied articles as bakers' oven peel[12] handles or stales; Boy Scout poles; chair and table legs; lamplighter handles; mangle rollers; rolling-pins; pump buckets; well rollers and well-hook stales; and even skittles and balls for the local public-house.

[1] PLOUGH-SPUD = PLOUGH-STAFF, -STICK. A rod with a flat iron for the purpose of cleaning a plough; a paddle. (Wright.)
[2] PULPER. A machine for cutting roots for cattle into very fine morsels. (Wright.)
[3] Presumably setting or planting sticks, cf. Dibbles.
[4] SPUD. A sort of hoe. ('East-Anglian Words', in Eng. Dial. Soc., iii, B20).
[5] TOMAHAWK. A hoe with a long handle used in brickmaking. There were brickyards near Clifton.
[6] Same as Swingletree. In a plough, harrow, carriage, etc., a cross-bar, pivoted at the middle, to which the traces are fastened, giving freedom of movement to the shoulders of the horse or other draught-animal. (O.E.D.)
[7] SWELLTREE. The bar by which a third horse is attached to a plough. (Wright.)
[8] HAND-STAFF. That part of a flail by which it is held. (O.E.D.)
[9] A variation of 'grind', a word also used in Bedfordshire. The end of a gate fitted with the latch or catch is called the 'head'; the opposite end, with the hinges fixed to it, is called the 'grind'.
[10] ROUND. A rung of a ladder.
[11] Lamb hurdles were constructed with a row of vertical rollers in the lower half of the hurdle, spaced sufficiently wide apart to enable lambs to pass through but not the ewes.
[12] PEEL. A flat, long-handled shovel used for taking bread and pies in and out of a brick oven. (Wright.) Peels have wood or iron blades.

Certain work undertaken was normally that of the village carpenter or wheelwright. Thus we find the Slaters supplying painted and numbered 'stumps' for identifying allotments let for cottage cultivation at Henlow, and even wooden 'grave stumps' or grave-boards for the churchyard at Langford supplied in 1914 complete with lettering. Repairs were carried out to agricultural machines.

About 1900, Jack Armour of Clifton, a part-time gamekeeper who was also a bird-catcher and rat-catcher, worked at intervals as a hurdle-maker for Joseph Slater. He brought his own tools and worked in the hurdle shed in Slater's yard. So it is not surprising to find entries in Slaters' books for 'cages' (bird-cages) in 1897 and sparrow-poles (for sparrow-nets) in 1899 supplied for Armour's use.

As was natural with a trade using much underwood, there was a ready sale for bean- and pea-sticks; faggots; firewood; posts of ash, chestnut, larch and oak; stakes described as fold,[1] hedge, netting, rose, raspberry, tomato and tree; thatching 'spits' sold in bundles of fifty; and stack 'pegs' sold by the hundred.

Customers for Slaters' products were located within a narrow radius of twelve miles from Clifton. Methods of reckoning were simple, goods being sold at price per dozen, price each, or by the bundle. During manufacture there were no methods of recording by tallies quantities made. There was nothing unusual in the way of costume. When turning at the lathe, leather aprons were worn, also white caps like those used by bakers. The sawyers wore corduroys but no aprons. No unusual trade customs or superstitions could be traced.

The account-books reveal that the Slaters bought their underwood (in poles or bundles or as 'rangewood'[2]), principally ash, poplar, and alder, and also trees of ash, oak, poplar and elm from Clifton Wood and other woods at Chicksands, Haynes Park, Ickwell, Northill, Southill and Warden, all within six miles of their shop. They were usually purchased in lots as growing or cut underwood and trees at sales. They themselves cut their wood in winter and hired timber carriages and carts from Clifton and Southill carters whose vehicles were repaired by the Slaters. The underwood was, if necessary, barked or 'rined'[3] and all timber was stacked for a year to dry out before being used. Two sawyers, Samuel and William Beaumont of Langford, were employed for several weeks at a time using Slaters' saw-pit. There are records of sawyers up to 1914, after which time timber was sawn up by a circular saw hired from a firm of agricultural engineers at Potton. Unfortunately the 'sawyers' book' in which their

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[1] For use when folding sheep.   [2] RANGE. Two rows of felled underwood. (Wright.)
[3] RIND. To strip the rind or bark from a tree. (O.E.D.)

PLATE II
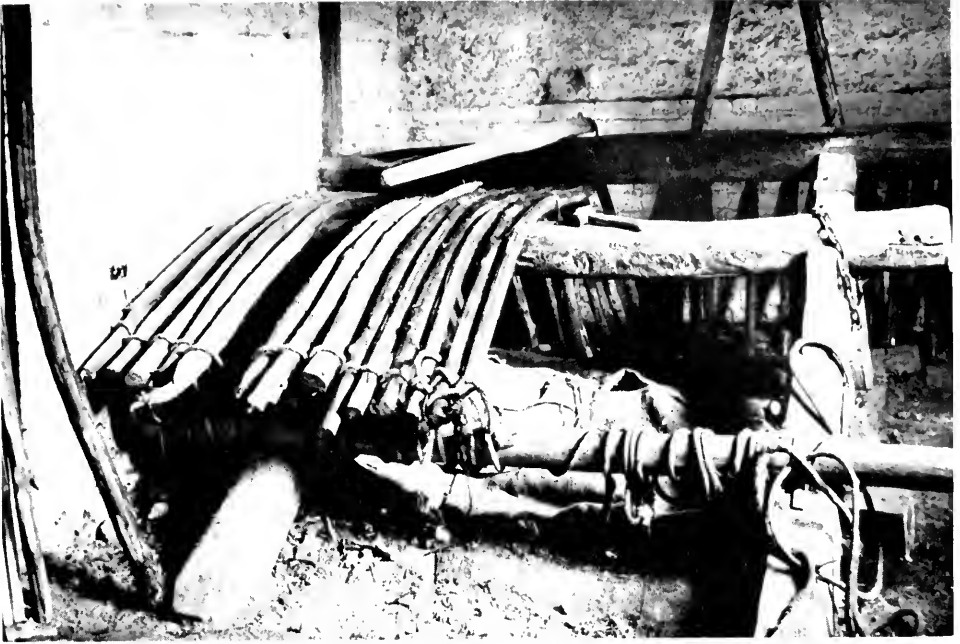
(1) SCYTHE-STICK MAKING, HAUGHLEY, SUFFOLK.   Press for bending scythe-sticks.

(2) RAKE-MAKING, HAUGHLEY, SUFFOLK.
Turning machine used with a round plane for turning rake-sticks.

PLATE III

(1) Bending Horse for rake-sticks.

(2) Shaving Horse for rake-sticks.

(3) Rounding Plane used on scythe-stick.

(4) Pointing rake teeth with a one-handled Shave.

CUTTING, RAKE AND SCYTHE-STICK MAKER, HAUGHLEY

work was recorded has been destroyed. Typical of their work was 'sawing out fencing posts and rails', 'cutting stock elm boards', 'cutting elm tree into manger bottoms and feather edge boards', 'sawyer's work cutting oak posts & elm boards & cant-rails'.[1]

Rake and Scythe-stick making at Haughley, Suffolk
(1853–1952)

The rake and scythe-stick[2] making area in Suffolk was centred round Stowmarket. There was still a master man of this trade working at Haughley up to 1952, but otherwise small makers had become extinct or been absorbed into a factory at Welnetham which produces scythe and other handles by machinery.

A small business as a 'rake and scythe-stick maker' was started in 1853 at Haughley by Samuel Rye (1800–1890). It was continued by Alfred Woods (1863–1931), who had married Rye's daughter. Woods was also the village postmaster and had been a coach-builder. In 1932 the shop was taken over by Arthur Thomas Cutting (born 1891) and continued by him until 1952, when he gave up business and closed the shop. Both Samuel Rye and Arthur Woods are buried in St. Mary's churchyard, Haughley.

Three rooms attached to a cottage in Duke Street, Haughley, formed the shop. The whole premises are of early construction, possibly seventeenth century. Walls are of clay with wattles and clay brick, plastered over. The pantile roof was originally thatched. The lay-out was simple, resembling the Slaters'. It was possible to obtain certain of the trade tools and products, also Samuel Rye's original day-book for 1854–59.

Cutting, a local boy, started work for Woods at the age of twelve, learning to make rakes and also acting as a telegraph messenger for Woods's post office. There was no proper apprenticeship. By the time Cutting took over the business trade was already declining. It had maintained five males in Rye's time, five or six in Woods's, whereas Cutting had only himself and an extra full-time man reduced later to a part-time one, and finally during and since the Second World War he worked on his own. Reasons for the decline of the business were the introduction of modern mass-production machinery and also foreign competition before the war. Those at work in the shop did not specialize in the making of any particular handle or tool, jobs being interchangeable. Payment was on piece-work. Records of quantities made were kept by tallies chalked up on the ceilings of the shop. Outside co-operation was with the woodman, the ironmonger for tools and nails, the blacksmith on Haughley Green for tools for use in the shop or iron parts for such things as forks, crank-handles and scythe

[1] CANT-RAIL. A triangular rail. (Wright.)   [2] Compare the name with Slaters' 'scythe-snath'.

PLATE IV
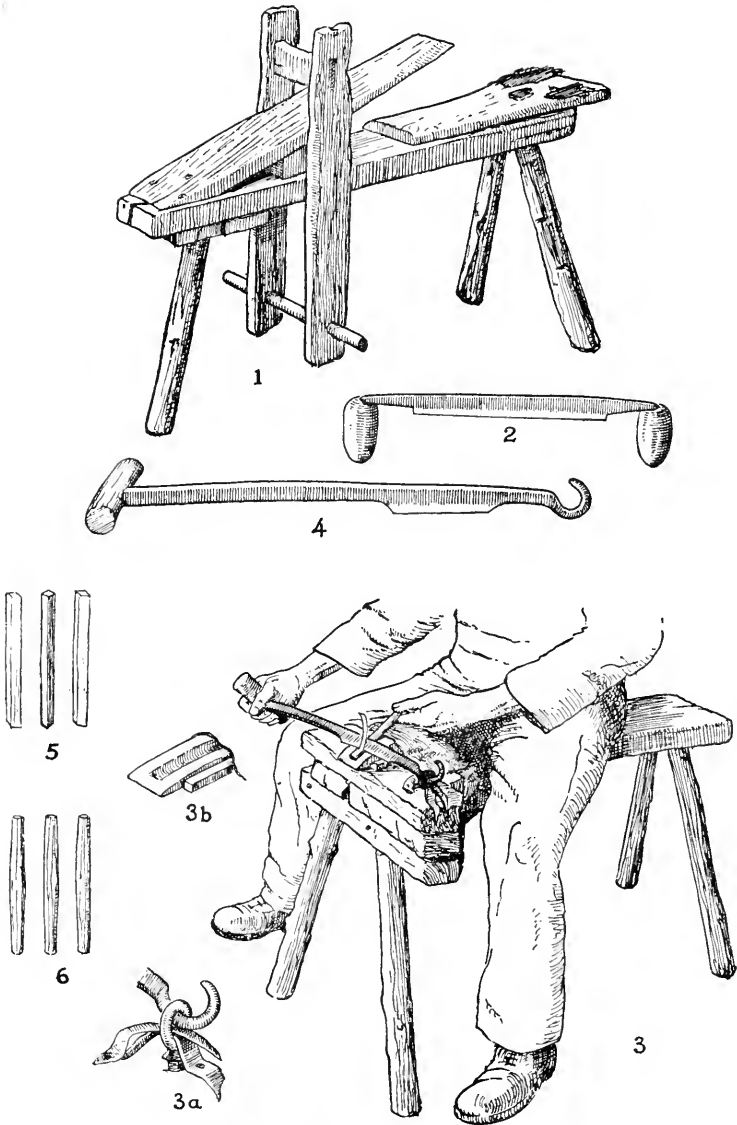
TOOLS FOR MAKING RAKE-STICKS AND RAKE TEETH, HAUGHLEY, SUFFOLK
(Dimensions given are overall lengths.)

1. Shaving Horse. (43½ in.)
2. Draw-knife. (16½ in.)
3. Tooth-stool. (32 in.)
    a. Detail of eye-bolt.
    b. Detail of front piece.

4. One-handled steel Shave. (24 in.)
5. Rake teeth, roughed out. (6 in.)
6. Rake teeth, completed.

cradles as well as iron rake-teeth, and finally the saddler for caps and thongs for flails. No special costume was worn by those working in the shop except for sack aprons and no trade customs or superstitions were traced.

Examination of Rye's day-book for 1854–59 shows that the principal products were rakes of various kinds and scythe-handles or 'sticks'. The commonest form of rake was the hand hay-rake with straight handle or 'stick' entering the head ('hade', 'haede') in one place or its variant the 'crotch' (or 'croch' or 'coch') rake, which was one with a 'fork' or split stick entering the head in two places. Then there were 'nail rakes' or 'iron rakes' being those with nail or blacksmith-made iron teeth, bow rakes with iron teeth for garden use, fine rakes, seed or 'sucklen'[1] rakes and thatching rakes ('thaten rakes'). Rake handles or 'sticks' were turned from ash, birch, willow, alder and hazel. Ash teeth were fashioned from the scrap ends of handles. Occasionally complete scythes were sold, but the trade was mainly in scythe 'sticks' and scythe-handles called 'tacks' or 'tackes'.[2] There are several records of the sale of a thing called a 'bat' or 'bate' which was probably some form of scythe-stick. Scythe-sticks were shaped from alder, birch and willow, the nibs or 'tacks' being turned from the same woods as the rake-sticks. Swath[3] rakes (referred to as 'suather', 'suther', 'swath', 'swather', 'sweather', 'sweth', 'swether', or 'swetar' rakes or even 'swets'), also called 'scythe cradles' were shop-made wooden (ash) attachments to a scythe-stick used when mowing wheat, oats and beans, serving to form a swath. They were different from the bales or 'bails' (pronounced 'bowls') also commonly made by Rye. These latter consisted of a bow made from a briar or stick cut from the hedge and were attached to the scythe particularly when mowing barley, again serving to form a swath.

Handles and small tools for agricultural use were regularly sold. There were hoe handles called 'howe sticks', turned from waste stuff not long enough for use in making rakes; spade handles; 'crank handles' which were straw-band twisters for making thatching 'skuds'[4] or straw bands; seat-sticks for horses called variously 'horse settes sticks', 'seetes sticks', and 'setts sticks' which were the same as hames; and horse shackles[5] (or 'shackels') made of ash and used with a chain and heavy block of wood to hold the feet of kicking horses or 'jumpers' and to prevent horses from straying. Complete flails (called 'thraile' and 'thrile') were sometimes made, also the individual parts consisting of the hand-staff ('handstarfe', 'harn-

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[1] SUCKLING. Clover. (O.E.D.) The white clover. (Wright.)
[2] TACKS. Each of the two nibs or handles of a scythe. (O.E.D.)
[3] SWATH, SWATHE. The space covered by the sweep of the mower's scythe; the width of grass or corn so cut. (O.E.D.)
[4] SKUD. Twisted straw.   [5] SHACKLE. A hobble for a horse. (O.E.D.)

starfe') made of ash and the shorter 'swingle' (also 'swingel') or striking part, made of elm or blackthorn, which, being tough woods, could withstand the heavy blows on the threshing floor. Cutting called the two arms a 'stick and a half'. On the swingle was fixed a leather cap and on the staff an ash cap, coupled together by a 'thong'.

Occasional products were fork stales; beetle[1] (called 'beatell') handles; shepherds' 'crook handles' (also called 'crook sticks' and 'shupard sticks'); dung-hook handles (called 'muck sticks' and 'muck crome handles'); turnip 'crome sticks'; plough-sticks[2] ('plowe sticks'); reaping hooks ('repe hooks'); sickles (called 'syckels'); corn and mud scuppets ('cupets') which were wooden shovels or scoops; spud[3] sticks; bushel strikes[4] used with bushel measures; whippletrees[5] ('wipltres' or 'wipltreses'); and two-tine 'shake fork[6] sticks'. Coopers were supplied with 'tat sticks' (i.e. tap-sticks) screwed for fixing in the taps of wooden barrels. Miscellaneous items included broom-sticks frequently mentioned in the day-book, peel[7] ('peale', 'pele') handles for bakers' shovels, hammer handles, pick handles or stales, cleaver handles and even stilts for the amusement of children. Waste wood and bags of chips found a ready sale.

In Cutting's time the principal products of the shop were rakes and scythe-sticks as in Rye's time. Of rakes the commonest were the hay-rakes with wooden teeth; then there were garden-rakes with iron teeth, wire-tooth rakes or Bedfordshire onion-rakes (for use in the Bedfordshire market-gardening area), moss rakes with nail teeth for use on lawns, wooden-toothed rakes or drags for use behind wagons, and leaf rakes with wooden teeth. Scythe cradles were still sold. Hoe handles and broom-sticks were in frequent demand and, of course, numerous small objects required by the villagers and farmers in the district.

Rakes were usually sold by the dozen, scythe-sticks formerly by the gross or half-gross, but latterly by the dozen, and wooden teeth by the gross.

Records in Rye's day-book indicate that even in 1854–59 distribution of his customers was more widespread than that of the Slaters' customers. In addition to his local customers in Suffolk, Rye dealt with ironmongers and others in the counties of Norfolk, Cambridge and the Isle of Ely, and Essex, within a radius of about thirty miles of Haughley. In Woods's and Cutting's time the radius had been extended to seventy miles in a westerly direction, including customers in Bedfordshire, North Buckinghamshire and Huntingdonshire.

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[1] BEETLE. See page 36, note 6.   [2] PLOUGH-STAFF, -STICK. See page 37, note 1.
[3] SPUD. See page 37, note 4.
[4] STRIKE. A smooth, straight piece of wood, with which the surplus grain is struck off, to level it with the rim of a measure. (Wright.)
[5] WHIPPLETREES. See page 36, note 8, and page 37, note 6.
[6] SHAKEFORK. A pitchfork. (O.E.D.)   [7] PEEL. See page 37, note 12.

PLATE V
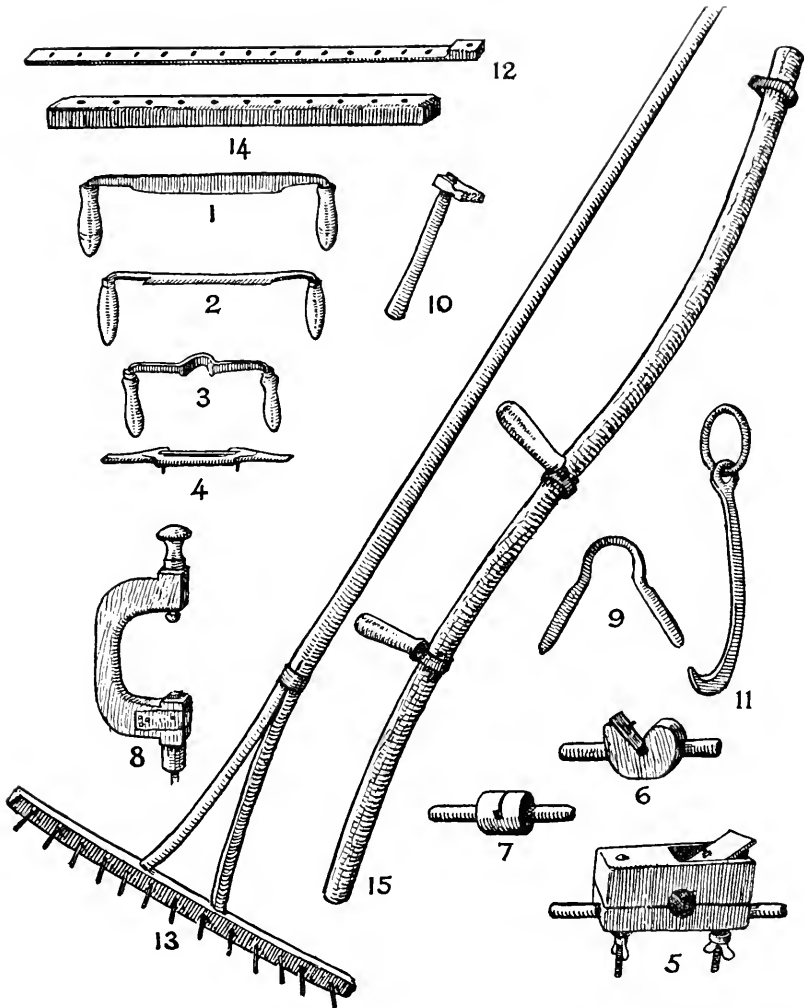
TOOLS OF A WOOD TURNER AND RAKE MANUFACTURER, CLIFTON, BEDFORDSHIRE
(Dimensions given are overall lengths unless otherwise stated.)

1, 2. Draw-knives (16½ in. and 15 in.)
3. Rounding Knife. (10 in.)
4. Spokeshave. (11¾ in.)
5. Rounding Plane or 'Turner'. For rounding rake stales. (Box 10¼ in. × 5⅜ in. × 4⅞ in.)
6. Turner (11 in.) for ladder rungs.
7. Turner. (9¾ in.)
8. Brace. (16½ in.)
9. Barking or Rinding Iron. (8 in.)

10. Branding Hammer.
11. Ring-dog. ('Dog', 15 in.)
12. Marker for rake-heads. (29 in.)
13. Rake. Wire-tooth type. (6 ft. 7½ in.)
14. Rake Head. (24 ins.)
15. Scythe-snath with 'nibs'. (5 ft. 6 in.)   The illustration shows the handle in an upside-down position.

TABLE A. TOOLS OF THE TRADE AND THEIR USES

Machine or tool	Slater, Clifton	Cutting, Haughley
SAW-PIT.	In early days did own pit-sawing, later employed saw-yers. Timber marked for sawing by means of a line coated with black charcoal, flicked when taut on to the wood to be cut, leaving a black mark behind.	Not used. No heavy timber employed.
RING-DOG or CANT-DOG.	Used a 'ring-dog' for turning over or moving heavy timber.	Not used.
BARKING IRON.	Used a 'Rinding Iron' for removing bark from poles.	Not used.
HALF-ROUND SHAVE. (Steel, with wooden 'egg' handles.)	Used a 'Rounding Knife'.	Used a 'Round Shave' for removing bark and for 'trimming up' after a stick had been 'turned up'.
ENGINES.	Small horizontal steam engine. It drove the lathe, saws and grindstone.	$3\frac{1}{2}$ h.p. paraffin engine for driving the home-made Turning Machine (see below), and circular saw.
STEAM BOX.	Called it a Steam Box or 'Steamer'. Construction similar to Cutting's. In early days steam produced from a copper, later from a steam boiler.	Called it a Steam Box. A wooden box used for steaming rake-sticks and scythe-sticks. It measures 12 ft. long by 1 ft. 3 in. wide by 1 ft. 6 in. deep. Steam was produced by a copper and fed through a hole into the box. Four dozen rake-sticks and $2\frac{1}{2}$ dozen scythe-sticks could be steamed at a time.
PRESS or STOCKS.	'Stocks' for bending scythe-snaths.	After being steamed, scythe-sticks were placed in a 'Press', a wooden three-rung stand for bending scythe-sticks. They were held in place by a rope and stick. The width of the press is 7 ft. 9 in.; the height at the top end 3 ft.
BENDING HORSE.	No record of one having been used.	'Bending Horse' for 'loosening up' rake-sticks to make them pliable so that they could be straightened.
SHAVING HORSE.	No record of one having been used.	A wooden, three-legged horse with cloth padded seat. Used for gripping rake-sticks while being shaved or 'trimmed up' before being turned.

TABLE A (*cont.*)—TOOLS OF THE TRADE AND THEIR USES

Machine or tool	Slater, Clifton	Cutting, Haughley
BRAKE and RENDING IRON. (Hurdle-maker's tools.)	Two 'Brakes' were used. A brake was a rough framework or stand weighted down with a heavy stone, intended to steady or grip wood while it was being rent with a Rending Iron. It was also used as a grip for holding stales while being shaped with a draw-knife.	Not used as made no hurdles.
DRAW-KNIFE or DRAWING-KNIFE. (Steel with wooden 'egg' handles.)	Used for shaping handles.	For shaving or trimming up rake-sticks before they were turned. Used with the Shaving Horse.
TURNING MACHINE.	Not used.	A simple home-made lathe-like machine, driven by the engine, used in conjunction with a Round Plane for turning rake-sticks, fork stales and broom-sticks. The round plane could be adjusted to make tapering handles.
LATHES.	Used a power-driven lathe for turning handles, etc. A bit fixed in the chuck of a hand-turned lathe was used to bore teeth holes in rake-heads.	Used a treadle lathe. Turning tools were called 'Ingenes'.
ROUNDING PLANE.	Used a 'Turner' for rounding rake stales and ladder rounds.	Used a 'Rounding Plane' for making scythe-sticks and long handles.
SHAGREEN.	Not used.	For smoothing handles instead of sandpaper which was considered too costly.
TOOTH-STOOL and SHAVE. (The Shave resembles a cooper's bench-knife.)	After having been roughed out, rake teeth were hammered through a sharp steel pipe and then driven into the head of the rake. Finally they were sharpened at the ends with a draw-knife, using a vice to grip them.	Used a four-legged 'Tooth Stool' in teeth-making. To the top of it is fixed an eye-bolt serving as a pivot for the hooked end of the one-handled steel 'Shave'. The tool was used for shaving and pointing rake teeth. The front piece is grooved to hold the teeth steady.
MARKER.	Used a wood 'Marker' to locate in pencil the positions for teeth holes in rake-heads.	Used a form of jig.

In Rye's time and later, rough wood, chiefly alder, ash, birch, hazel and willow, was obtained from a wood at Broad Border and East Wood, both at Haughley, Shelland Wood, Woolpit Wood and Northfield Wood at Harleston, all within a radius of two and a quarter miles from the shop. It was purchased from local woodmen dealing in underwood during the period January to May. Between August and September the 'stuff' was sorted out and prepared and packed in the dry ready for 'making up' into finished articles between October and July.

Tools of the Trade and their uses

As has already been pointed out, the lay-outs of Slaters' and Cutting's workshops were similar and the trade tools they both used were much the same. They are therefore dealt with together in Table A (pp. 44-5). This list does not include saw-benches, carpenters' benches, grindstones, vices, felling axes, hand-saws, turning tools, braces and bits, jack planes, spokeshaves, and tool-branding irons such as might be found in any woodworker's shop. The various machines and tools can be identified by reference to Plates II–V.

Acknowledgements

The writer wishes to thank Joseph Slater's daughters for information so readily given and Mr. A. T. Cutting who spared no pains in answering numerous questions and in demonstrating the use of tools peculiar to his trade. He is grateful, too, to Mr. R. B. Finney for care taken in photographing details, to Mr. C. E. Freeman for drawings of the tools, and to his son, Richard W. Bagshawe, who is responsible for the drawing of the plan of the Slaters' premises at Clifton. Specimens of trade tools and finished products acquired from both workshops are in the writer's collection at Luton Museum, Luton, Bedfordshire.

The Welsh Folk-Life Survey

D URING the first half of the present century, precedence in folk-life studies in Wales was given to the collection of materials illustrating Welsh life. This resulted in the creation in 1936 of a Department of Folk Life in the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff. This was merged into the Welsh Folk Museum when that institution was opened at St. Fagans in 1948. The national Welsh folk collection, brought together for the most part since 1927, is now one of the principal national collections of its kind in Europe. Unfortunately only a small proportion of it can be exhibited until the new Welsh Folk Museum building has been erected (at an estimated cost of over a quarter of a million pounds). Funds to complete this building are urgently needed.

It has now become possible to begin the systematic recording of Welsh oral traditions. It is proposed to appoint during this summer (1956) to the staff of the Welsh Folk Museum an Assistant Curator with special linguistic qualifications who will undertake the collection of data relating to all aspects of the Welsh oral tradition, e.g. vocabularies—domestic, craft, agricultural, etc.—(with tape recordings), folk tales, lore and customs, and all information possible concerning the spiritual background of Welsh life and culture. Accommodation for this survey has been planned in the proposed Folk Museum building at St. Fagans, but it is felt that in view of the impact of modern civilization on the traditional life of the countryside, the initiation of this work can be no longer delayed. It is hoped that it may be begun before the end of 1956.

Immediately after the Second World War a Committee on Welsh Calendar Customs was set up under the patronage of the Council of the Folk-lore Society of London. This Committee prepared an Ecclesiastical Questionnaire which was circulated to all incumbents of the Church in Wales. The results were most disappointing. The Committee also prepared a General Questionnaire on Welsh Calendar Customs which it had hoped to circulate in 1948 to interested persons in every parish in Wales. In the preparation of this document, the services of Mr. R. U. Sayce, M.A., M.Sc., Keeper of the Manchester Museum and a native of Montgomeryshire, were outstanding. Unfortunately, due to reasons beyond the control of

the members of the Committee, the questionnaire was never circulated. With the death of the chairman and the departure from Wales of the honorary secretary the Committee became defunct.

In July 1955 it was decided to set up a Welsh Folk-life Survey Committee which, it is hoped, will assist the Museum to collect data relating to Welsh folk traditions. The chairman is Dr. Iorwerth C. Peate (Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum) and the honorary secretary, Mr. Trefor M. Owen (Assistant Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum). Its members include the professors of Welsh in the four University Colleges; the Librarian and the Head of the Department of Manuscripts in the National Library of Wales; together with Professor Emeritus William Rees, Professor Emrys G. Bowen and Mr. R. U. Sayce.

The first project sponsored by this Committee is the issue of the General Questionnaire compiled by the defunct Committee on Welsh Calendar Customs. Through the courtesy of the Museum Council, this will be circulated in conjunction with another, more general, questionnaire prepared before the war in the then Department of Folk Life in the National Museum of Wales. It is hoped that the answers to these two questionnaires will add substantially to the archive of Welsh oral traditions at the Welsh Folk Museum.

Many readers of GWERIN may be prepared to offer their help in this important work. The Committee recognizes that in the present circumstances the most effective method of laying a foundation for the survey is that of seeking the voluntary co-operation of the people of Wales (who form a notable percentage of the subscribers to this journal) in answering questionnaires on various aspects of folk life.

Help is sought from two types of persons: first, the person who can himself supply information on some or all of the topics; second, the person who can put us in touch with others who are likely to be able and willing to help, or better still, who can himself act as a local correspondent and collect the contributions of several local informants to build up a complete picture for the area.

The more general *Questionnaire on Welsh Folk Culture* covers a wide field, only a part of which may come within the knowledge and experience of a single person. This should not prevent individuals, however, from giving us as many details as possible about the sections which they are able to answer.

Copies of the questionnaires will be sent free of charge to any person who is prepared to co-operate in the work (from the Assistant Curator, Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans, Cardiff).

GWERIN

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE reception given to the first number of GWERIN has proved encouraging, but we need a far greater number of readers than we have at present. Over fifty copies of the issue were sent out for review, but about four-fifths of the journals and papers concerned did not trouble even to announce the appearance of GWERIN. It received its warmest welcome from newspapers in Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

*   *   *

We hope that our readers are now convinced that a journal of folk life studies is necessary, and that they will persuade their friends to subscribe to GWERIN regularly. The greater the number of subscribers, the more can be offered in pages and illustrations. It is surely not unreasonable to hope for a minimum of two thousand readers. The Editor would like to announce that this target will have been reached before the end of 1957.

*   *   *

We hope to publish GWERIN regularly on the 15th June and 15th December. Copy for the present issue was ready on the 3rd October, but printing difficulties over which we had no control caused a slight delay. We apologize for this, and hope to be able in future to keep strictly to our time-table. Once more we appeal to contributors to submit articles, notes, etc., on any aspect of folk life.

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This reference to aspects of folk life leads to a consideration of the place of the subject in any scheme of studies. On page 53, our colleague Mr. Trefor M. Owen writes of the 'legitimate approaches to the study of

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folk life' and mentions those of the social anthropologist, the folk-lorist, the ethnologist and the archaeologist. Since the study of material culture has been by its very nature principally a museum activity, departments of folk life in museums have generally grown out of collections of 'by-gones' which were in the past the concern of archaeologists. As a result, folk life has too often suffered from a one-sided archaeological approach, and the jargon of that subject applied uncritically to its problems. The study of folk life is the study of life and culture and essentially of the history of living cultures. For that reason it is much more closely related to the field of the social anthropologist, the ethnologist and the historian than to that of prehistory. In the study of houses, for example, the discipline of architectural training can serve us far better than a dependence on archaeological techniques. Let us beware of a too facile use of terms such as 'types', 'distributions', and 'time-lags'.

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Archaeology, as a method of studying the past, naturally has its limitations: so has 'professional history' which Dr. Toynbee has described as 'the preserve of university teachers'. Dr. Toynbee adds (*The Observer*, 13.11.1955): 'The apparatus has frustrated the enterprise. In latter-day western historical technicians' hands, history has come to mean doing post-mortem intelligence work on documents from the registries of Government departments in Western States, instead of meaning a search for historical light on the nature and destiny of Man.'

Professor Herbert Butterfield corroborates this view when he sees that 'the technical student in any branch of science or learning is arguing in a circle if he thinks that his researches have in fact eliminated from life the things which, for technical reasons, he had eliminated in advance from his consideration. In reality, the poet, the prophet, the novelist and the playwright command sublimer realms than those of technical history, because they reconstitute life in its wholeness.'

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It may be the business of the student of folk life, through his work, to keep both the archaeologist and the professional historian in their places, because his real function is to 'reconstitute life in its wholeness', a function which the 'pre-academic' historians from Thucydides to Lord Acton and Sir Winston Churchill rightly conceived as that of the true historian. Spade, parchment and all the materials of every-day life provide him with his data, for it is with the story of 'life in its wholeness' that he is concerned. The self-complacent specialist may therefore call him an amateur: that need not worry him, for he will be in a good company.

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Recent developments in Wales may have a wider significance for readers of this journal. The Forestry Commission plans, during the next generation, to plant trees so widely that about one-eighth of the total land of Wales will be afforested. Tenant farmers complain that even now much of their 'middle land' is affected, leaving them with fields around their houses and with mountain tops, so ruining their economy and indirectly forcing them out of agriculture. It is a sobering thought that much of the history of civilization in Wales has been the story of the clearing of land for cultivation and that now the process has been put into reverse. The present writer has walked many miles over Forestry Commission estates in Wales to see abandoned houses enclosed by trees and the countryside depopulated.

It can be argued with much truth that life had already become too difficult in many of these upland holdings, and that for years small farms have had to be joined to larger farms to make them pay. It is felt by many who are competent to judge that this sad state of affairs is due to the lack of an adequate national plan for Welsh agriculture and that the only unit which is important for the future of the Welsh countryside is the small farm. This contention has been 'eliminated in advance from the consideration' of those politicians and economists who have invented the term 'marginal land' to substantiate a contrary thesis.

In the meantime, afforestation continues. Large tracts of fertile land, such as the Epynt area of Brecknockshire (where the Old Red Sandstone reaches to the highest points) and parts of the Vale of Glamorgan were compulsorily acquired in the 1930's and 40's by the Defence Ministries as artillery ranges and aerodromes. Liverpool Corporation has now moved to obtain consent to drown yet another valley in mid-Wales (the Tryweryn valley in Merioneth: Llanwddyn in Montgomeryshire provided Lake Vyrnwy for the same city early in the twentieth century). The proposed new lake will draw water from 40,000 acres of Welsh land. Amazing though it may seem, amongst the ten schemes considered, the drowning of the town of Bala—one of the great centres of the Welsh cultural tradition—was discussed, and rejected, because of the 'great issues that would be raised by sentiment and other causes'. Experts have suggested, too, the drowning (for future water supplies for the great cities of England) of the Rhondda and Neath valleys. Remembering that Wales is only a small country, one is appalled at the possibility of the complete extinction of a cultural tradition and sensible of the need for the intensive study of its characteristics. For new villages built by the Forestry Commission and the large corporations will not re-create the old scattered communities. Nor will the suggested urban timber factories, ancillary

to forestry, develop the rural organization of the past centuries. These
are problems which no student of folk life can ignore.

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Finally, a plea on behalf of students of prehistory. In Wales—as
undoubtedly in other countries—there are scores of prehistoric sites which
have not been recorded on any map. Many of them are now being planted
with trees and so completely concealed. The archaeologist of the future
will not be able to find them, and even if he can, they will be found to be
completely ruined: roots are no respecters of ancient monuments. Cannot
some action be taken to safeguard such sites? We suggest that no area
should be planted before it is carefully surveyed by a professional
archaeologist.

The 'Communion Season' and Presbyterianism in a Hebridean Community

Trefor M. Owen

AMONG the legitimate approaches to the study of folk-life that of
the social anthropologist may be included alongside those of the folk-
lorist, the ethnologist and the archaeologist. Indeed, the unity which
folk-life research displays seems less associated with methodology than with
the field delineated for study from these diverse angles. The total content
of the folk culture of a community such as the Hebridean one in question
includes not merely the folklore which has been handed down from
generation to generation, and not merely the material culture, whether
the houses and their contents or agricultural implements and their use,
but also the very day-to-day life of that community, particularly to the
extent that it is repetitive and thus open to analysis by the methods of
social anthropology. The main religious festival of the presbyterian
communities, though neither as ancient nor as picturesque as the folklore
elements still existent (if perhaps dormant) in the communities, is equally
worthy of study. Quite often a single ceremony or series of ceremonies
possesses a key significance which helps us in our understanding of the
social life. The 'Communion Season', for instance, is related within the
life of the churches to the absence of church activities of a secular character
and also to the hierarchical structure of the congregations, and, in the life
of the community, to features not directly thought of as being connected
with it, such as the persistence of traditional folk forms. The connection,
however, is not one of causality but rather of co-existence within the
general scene.

It is unnecessary to remind Scotsmen that their particular brand of the
Protestant religion is far from being uniform throughout their country.
They will be well aware that the Highlands and Islands, in particular,
subscribe to a stricter brand of presbyterianism which adopts a negative
attitude towards social life in general. They may also realize that the
differences between the three main branches of the national religion
in the Hebrides derive ultimately not from any fundamental disagreement
over doctrine or the basic presbyterian form of organization, but rather

over conservatism towards changes in religious practice which took place within the Established Church on the mainland during the last century. The three Protestant denominations of the Islands, the Church of Scotland, the Free Church of Scotland and the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland, are equally calvinistic in doctrine and presbyterian in organization, and to a certain extent duplicate each other in structure. Such are the conditions in the crofting community in the Outer Hebrides where the fieldwork on which this paper is based was carried out in 1953.[1]

In the calendar of the presbyterian churches of the island the meetings of the 'Communion Season' constitute the red letter days, exceeding in importance even the traditional Christian festivals of Christmas, Easter and Whitsun. Until 1929 the 'Communion Season' was an annual event in the community, but since that year, which marked the amalgamation of the United Free Church with the Church of Scotland, the two 'Communion Seasons' of the previously separate denominations have been held each year by the local Church of Scotland; the Free Church and the Free Presbyterian Church have within the last fifteen years followed this example. Although now held twice yearly, in July and November,[2] the ceremony maintains its character as a major religious festival to a degree unparalleled in, for example, the nonconformist chapel life of Wales.

The Communion meetings begin on a Thursday and continue until the following Monday, the climax, of course, being the actual Communion Service on Sunday. After the service on the preceding Sunday the minister solicits the help of members of the congregation in scrubbing and cleaning the church in preparation for the meetings: generally a few persons volunteer—as a rule never more than one from any single household. Thursday, the first day of the Communion 'week', is observed as a 'fast day', i.e. like an ordinary Sunday in every respect. Observance of the fasting in the sense of abstinence from food is unknown nowadays, but no work is done on the land, the shops are closed and *ceilidhing* is frowned upon. Although the ban on work is still rigidly observed, there has been a slight relaxation as compared with former times. In 1953, for example, one local shopkeeper who attended the services opened his shop for a short while in between the services, 'a thing which his father would never have done', as local people commented. But it is noteworthy that some of those who criticized him were among his customers on the 'fast day'. The cessation of work on the land in this predominantly crofting community emphasizes the advent of this important event in the religious life. The services in the churches are attended by rather more people than

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[1] The material included in this study was collected for the School of Scottish Studies in the University of Edinburgh.
[2] The local Free Presbyterian Church holds its Communions in July and February.

normally attend on Sundays. For each 'Communion Season' two ministers are invited to assist the resident minister, this being one of the rare opportunities which the congregation has of hearing visiting preachers. On the Thursday the ministers preach in different congregations affiliated to the local church, the note struck both in the sermons and prayers being that of confession and of a searching of the heart in preparation for the sacrament.

Friday morning's meeting in the church is of a distinctive kind in which opportunity is given to individual members to participate fully. A notable feature of the presbyterian churches of the Hebrides is the small number of members. In the community in question the Church of Scotland has 16, the Free Church 11, and the Free Presbyterian Church 13 members. The proportion of members to adherents varies between 1 : 10 and 1 : 15. The three ministers in the morning meeting sit alongside each other in the pulpit and the service is conducted by the resident minister in the normal fashion of a Sunday service until the sermon is reached. Instead of delivering a sermon, however, the minister calls on one of the elders (or a male member), decided upon beforehand, to 'put the question' to the members. This consists of a biblical verse on which the elder would like to have some clarification and also the views of members from the standpoint of their spiritual experience. Briefly he expresses the difficulties he encounters, and gives the question out to the members in the form of a request for the marks of true Christian experience as opposed to mere profession. The verse which he has chosen is kept a close secret before the meeting, not even the ministers being aware of it. Before the members are called on to speak, the senior visiting minister addresses them on the exegesis of the verse, putting it in its context in the Bible. He does not deal with religious experience, but confines himself to refreshing the minds of the congregation and giving the members time to think. The resident minister calls on the 'brethren' in turn, beginning, out of courtesy, with members who have come from other churches belonging to the same denomination. There may be half a dozen or more such members who have travelled from other islands, Glasgow or the Highlands to participate in the Communion. Often they stay in the manse with the minister and his wife and guest ministers, temporarily increasing the household to eighteen or so, including local helpers who live in. Life in the manse during the 'Season' is marked by prayer-meetings over and above the meetings held in the church. Formerly many more members visited other churches during Communions; the phrase 'Mr. —— was well-known at Communion seasons in Lewis' is one which occurs in many obituary notices in the denominational periodicals, but nowadays it is rarely necessary for any to stay (apart from having meals) in houses other than the manse.

Preference in the Friday morning meetings is always given to the visiting members, usually in order of seniority. Following them, the male members of the local church are called upon to speak. Each address, delivered facing the pulpit from the pews in the centre of the church, lasts between ten and twenty minutes. Women members are not called upon at all, so there may be only five or six speakers. When they have finished, the junior minister is called upon to 'close the question'. This generally means adding his remarks to those already made. At one time, however, the purpose of the closing address was to correct any heretical views which may have been expressed from the floor. The meeting ends with a prayer by the elder who gave out the question. The whole service usually lasts over three hours; in the course of it, all three ministers and all male members have had an opportunity of speaking to a congregation which is augmented by people from other churches of the same sect.

The Friday evening service is on lines similar to the Sunday service. Its keynote is hope and further promise for the believer, and it is taken by the senior minister. The resident minister announces that after the service the Kirk Session—the meeting of church officers—will interview any persons who wish to become members for the first time. The Kirk Session also meets after the morning and evening services on Saturday for a similar purpose, and, in exceptional cases, a new member may be admitted even on the Sunday morning, if there appears to be some justification.

The Saturday services have yet another emphasis, this time of spiritual comfort for the members. The morning meeting is an ordinary service, but it is followed by a special meeting in which tokens are distributed among the members who will take Communion the following day. At this meeting only the members are present; they are questioned briefly and led in prayer by the Minister; reference is made to the presence of any new members. Nowadays there is far less recruitment to the ranks of church members and such a step is one which calls for special comment and which arouses interest among the congregation. However, it is only in the actual Communion Service on Sunday that most people get to know about a new member. 'Were there any new people at the Table to-day?' is a frequent question asked of those who attended. The handing out of tokens is no longer really necessary as a means of estimating the number of participants nor as a means of identifying the members. It has become a ritual associated with the status—literally a *token* of membership. The tallies—small metallic objects similar to coins—are handed back during the Communion Service. Strictly speaking no one is served with the elements unless a token is handed over; but a member from a sister church who is recognized will, out of politeness, be allowed to partake of

the Communion. There are recent instances, however, where this privilege has been denied to a local member who did not speak during the Saturday morning meeting and who thus did not receive a token.

The Saturday evening service is a prayer meeting held in the absence of the Ministers. The meeting is open to all and sundry, but the tradition is for the Ministers to stay away 'because the members are self-conscious'. Instead, the sick members who cannot attend church are visited by the ministers who hold a short service with them.

The climax of the week is the Communion Service on Sunday afternoon which lasts from twelve noon until after three o'clock. This is preceded by an informal prayer meeting held by the members in preparation for the full service. It is one of the marks of the Communion Season that members interact more frequently in such meetings which, in the Free Presbyterian Church for instance, are held daily at 8 a.m. When the preliminary prayer meeting on the Sunday is over, the congregation files in quietly to await the arrival of the ministers.

The interior of the church is not decorated on this special occasion, but there is a slight difference in appearance in that the first five rows in the central block of pews are draped in white. These are the seats which the members will occupy during the actual Communion; they are left vacant for the first half of the service for the congregation usually fills the back and sides of the building. Before the draped pews is the small table to which the elements are brought to be served. The three ministers enter and ascend to the pulpit where they sit side by side, facing the congregation. Below them sit two precentors who will take it in turn to lead the singing from the dais between the pulpit and the congregation. Having a second precentor is an innovation, but it is welcomed as relieving the burden on the shoulders of the first and as an opportunity to give visiting precentors from sister churches a chance to participate. The first part of the service follows closely the plan of the ordinary Sunday service. The senior minister supervises and delivers the 'action' sermon as the pre-Communion sermon is called. The distinctive part of the service begins with the 'fencing of the table', an address from the pulpit in which the senior minister, using Galatians, chapter 5, as his guide, outlines the forms of behaviour which disqualify anyone from taking Communion. The 'fencing' is the safeguarding of the Communion Table from persons who have no right to come forward and the emphasizing of the sanctity of the occasion. After the address a psalm is sung in the traditional slow style, but the singing is interrupted by a sign from the minister to the precentor in order to call the members forward to the Table. The singing recommences and the members, loath at first to leave their places, come forward with a show of reluctance to the draped pews. In the Free Presbyterian

Church and the Free Church the members remain in their own pews until called upon by the minister to move. In the Church of Scotland the members go directly to the draped pews on entering the church. The difference is slight, but its implications are emphasized by the smaller sects; the fact that communicants come forward only after the Table is 'fenced' emphasizes that they are obliged to search their hearts and question their worthiness before they partake of the elements. In many Church of Scotland congregations, especially on the mainland, the 'fencing of the Table' is omitted from the service, not without criticism from the stricter sects.

The ministers descend from the pulpit, the senior minister officiates at the Table while the other two sit in the front pew facing the Table. Two of the elders meanwhile bring forward the elements from the elders' pews where they are stored away during the first part of the service. The senior elder hands them over to the next in seniority, and they are brought to the Table. The elders stand on either side of the central block, ready to pass around the plate and the cup. First, however, the officiating minister reads out his authority from the New Testament (1 *Cor.* ii), gives a short talk on the meaning and significance of the ritual, and then prays. The bread is broken and the elements are dispensed by the senior minister to his fellow ministers in the front pew. They are then handed to the elders for serving to the rest of the participants. The plate and cup are passed from one end of the pew to the other and handed by the elder at either end to the next row. When all five pews have been served in this way, the elements are brought forward to the Table again. The officiating minister and the serving elders now sit in the front pew while the elements are dispensed to them by the resident minister. When the sacrament is over, the officiating minister delivers a short address, the burden of which is the necessity of returning to the wilderness after the feast. The members return to their places and the ministers to the pulpit while the congregation sings the 103rd psalm. The meeting ends with a prayer, the singing of a psalm, and the benediction.

In the past, when there were far more members, it was often necessary to hold two or three sittings or 'Tables'. Each minister would then officiate at one 'Table', the eldest minister being given pride of place. Each delivered a pre-Communion address and a further address after dispensing the sacrament—and the addresses took up to half an hour in former days— with the result that the whole service was considerably longer than the three hours it takes nowadays. Where there was more than one 'Table', the members would come forward according to seniority, beginning with the church officials. But some who particularly wanted to receive the elements while a particular minister was officiating could go out of their

turn; the order was not rigidly observed. To-day, when there is only one 'Table', the seating arrangements are informal, the only distinction being between the ministers and the serving elders on the one hand, and the ordinary members on the other. The missionary (paid lay preacher) sits with the ordinary members. Men and women sit together in the pews during the actual communion.

Another service, taken by the junior minister, is held on Sunday evening, in which attention is directed towards the unconverted, the sermon being evangelical in spirit. The congregation is as large as in the afternoon and much larger than in a normal Sunday service. The whole festival is rounded off with a Thanksgiving Service on Monday. Most of the visiting members leave the district to catch the night boat to the mainland and adjoining islands. Some of them will be seen at other Communions held in other parts of the Highlands and Islands, a practice which cynical persons regard as 'getting a holiday on the cheap'. But the attendance of visiting members is one of the features which distinguish the Communion Season meetings from the ordinary services throughout the rest of the year.

How does the elaborate Communion festival fit in with the rest of the social life of the presbyterian congregation? How is the great emphasis placed on the 'Season' to be accounted for? Is there any correlation between this emphasis and other characteristics of church or community life? These, and similar questions, call for a closer examination of the implications of the festival.

The most significant change in status within the congregation which an individual can take is that from adherent to member. Becoming a member is equated with the taking of Communion, and new members are accepted only during the 'Communion Season', although erring members may be deprived of their privileges at any time by an extraordinary meeting of the Kirk Session. It is in this sequence of meetings at Communion time, particularly the Friday morning and Sunday morning services, that the differences between adherents and members are brought into focus and given a ritual expression. Although held in accordance with biblical injunction the ritual of the Communion serves, perhaps unpurposedly, to emphasize these status differences; furthermore, stress is laid on the importance of the ceremony itself by the subordinate preparatory meetings held in conjunction with it. It is in the fervour of the climax that public recognition (or display) of the basic change of status occurs, although actual admission takes place in the Kirk Session following detailed questioning on spiritual experiences, belief and behaviour.

The significance of this status change depends ultimately on its effect on the behaviour of the individual, and a consideration of this point

takes us outside the immediate life of the church. Becoming a church member implies a reorientation of one's activities during the preceding period on which admittance into membership sets a seal. One no longer attends dances or *ceilidhs*, but instead observes the Sabbath not only by not breaking it (though this is strongly emphasized), but also by the more positive method of attending church services regularly. This injunction also extends to week-day religious services although these are less frequent. The ideals of sexual continence and of sobriety (as distinct from total abstinence) must be strictly observed, and it is expected that members no longer attend the local concerts where the Gaelic songs are sung, and the country dances (which are often held after the concerts) where the traditional steps are danced to the music of the bagpipes or accordion. In fact, church membership is not something to be lightly undertaken, it implies in many respects a withdrawal from numerous social activities in which adherents normally participate, albeit under discouragement from the churches. As compensation for this withdrawal there is more frequent participation in the purely religious activities of the churches.

The age at which the change of status from adherent to member takes place varies, but is rarely below thirty-five, and often much later. Since it involves so much abstinence from forms of social life which appeal to young people, and since young people have often not thought over its consequences or been sufficiently indoctrinated, membership is confined to the middle-aged and the old. One sometimes hears the cynical remark that people wait until they have one foot in the grave before becoming members. On the other hand, there is the feeling that young people are unfit for the privilege of membership merely by reason of their youthfulness. Moreover, the attitude towards the church member is not appropriate towards a young person. It is felt that young people must have an outlet for their energy; while some members bring up their children with great strictness regarding 'worldly' behaviour and activities, a certain amount of latitude is allowed because of their youth. It is realized that responsibility for one's actions is ultimately a personal matter, even though it may be buttressed about by parental authority. The mainland pattern of automatic membership at about eighteen years of age is strongly criticized, especially by the Free Church and the Free Presbyterian Church. In the local Church of Scotland three children of an elder became members before they were thirty, but this is exceptional, and would not be found in the two other sects: it marks a trend towards mainland usage, a tendency which is held back by the criticism of the smaller denominations which regard any such steps as the betrayal of the presbyterian and calvinistic heritage.

The basis of this difference in status which the Communion Season serves to emphasize lies in the traditional calvinism still rigidly maintained in the Hebrides; all three denominations subscribe wholeheartedly to the doctrine of the elect. The distinction between adherent and member ties up with the whole attitude of the churches towards original sin and towards Man as a totally depraved creature incapable of achieving his own salvation. Salvation, which is the work of the grace of God upon such sinners, is selective; only the chosen—the elect—being counted among the saved. Since, by the religious charter which the denominations hold, all cannot be saved and yet all need the church for their spiritual benefit, a category of affiliation to the congregation is required for those who cannot pronounce that they have been saved, but who may at a future date undergo the necessary change. Salvation is a process of inner change wrought wholly from the outside through the work of grace; it is not ultimately dependent on individual action and there is a distrust of 'good works' in themselves without the accompanying spiritual transformation. Translated into sociological terms, this means that a change of behaviour is not of itself sufficient to justify a change of status within the group.

Alongside the sharp distinction between adherent and member must be placed another important feature of calvinism, namely the separateness of the sacred and the secular, the church and the 'world'. Relying on the Bible as the repository of divinely inspired and revealed knowledge, and on the Confession of Faith as a secondary and calvinistic interpretation of it, the churches have confined their group life to strictly religious meetings; and in the religious services themselves all elements of a possibly secular character are ruthlessly eliminated. The hymns sung are restricted to the metrical versions of the psalms, other hymns being regarded as 'vain songs'. Musical instruments in the churches are frowned upon by all three local churches, and none of them in fact possesses an organ. No week-night meetings of a secular kind are held under the auspices of the churches. Sisterhoods, socials, literary societies, Bands of Hope, choirs, eisteddfodau—in fact all the features which a Welshman unconsciously associates with the social life of the chapel are entirely lacking in this milieu;[1] and it is to the rigid upholding of the separateness of church and 'world' that the absence of these features is due. Incidentally, the Communion Season undoubtedly gains in importance from this absence of rival secular institutions organized by the churches. Even in the hierarchical arrangement of the church (apart from the adherent/member dichotomy already discussed) the distinction is made between deacons, who care for the upkeep of church fabric and the financial side of church administration, and

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[1] Cf. the writer's study of the chapels and the social life of a Welsh community in a forthcoming publication of the University of Wales.

the elders who are concerned only with the spiritual aspect of church life. The same dualism is exemplified by the traditional Highland wedding in which the religious service—the 'marriage'—is conceived of as being separate from the 'wedding', the ensuing secular celebrations. To the former only immediate relatives and close friends are invited, but the celebrations are attended by many more guests. The dancing which is part of the 'wedding', is not frowned upon so much as when it takes place as an end in itself; but church members usually leave early and do not take part in the dancing. The distinction between secular and sacred cannot be achieved so easily in the funeral as in the marriage and wedding. The tendency thus has been to eliminate the wake as an occasion for heavy drinking, and also the distribution of whisky in the cemetery. The custom of piping at funerals was suppressed over a century ago.

In its attitude to social life, therefore, the church adopts a negative standpoint. Where it lies in its power to do so, it attempts to exclude or modify much of the secular side. The churches' power, however, is limited to those activities in which it participates. Thus, by refraining from participation in recreational activities, it forfeits its power to alter them, except indirectly. Since the majority of persons who participate in such social life are connected in some degree with the local congregations, the problem arises as to how the churches influence the behaviour of these people, and thus, indirectly, their secular activities. In a body which holds itself to be apart from the 'world' and subscribes to different values, internal tension is likely to arise when the group personnel have the opportunity of participating in activities opposed by the church. With so many persons attached to the church, not 'saved', there is always the risk of 'contamination' of the church by contact with the 'world'. Worldly behaviour thus creates the problem of control within the group.

The influence of the church over its adherents is a weak point in its organization. Its control is exercised mainly by exhortation, dissuasion and denouncement, usually from the pulpit. This is often ineffective. On the Sunday before a dance one may hear the dance condemned vigorously by the minister to a congregation which includes many who attend it. Sometimes such disapproved behaviour is denounced after the event in an abstract way, but it is often felt by guilty persons to be directed towards themselves in a personal manner. Direct dissuasion by a minister or elder is rare; their influence lies rather in the fact that it is generally known that they disapprove. But behaviour may, as usually as not, be framed with complete disregard for this knowledge which is thus often ineffective. Furthermore, the absence of the minister or elder from secular social life reduces to a minimum his personal influence over it. Disapproved behaviour can thus only be preached against in the hope that

the guilty person will of his own accord mend his ways. Since adherents have no status or privilege within the congregation, there is no deprival which can be threatened where the adherent himself is concerned.

There is, however, an exception to this general statement which relates not to the adherent himself but to his children. Before the baptism of a child is allowed, the father is interviewed by the Kirk Session. He is questioned on the catechism and on his past behaviour. When a request for baptism is received by the Minister, he is informed by the elders of any past defection of character on the part of the father. If, for instance, he is known to be the father of an illegitimate child, he is required to confess this to the Session, to express his repentance, and to give a true promise that he will mend his ways. Should he protest his innocence, and should the Session be convinced otherwise, a situation is created which can only be resolved by resort to the Presbytery. The Presbytery can give the Session authority to administer an oath of purgation. Two members of the Presbytery are sent to administer the oath to the recalcitrant in the presence of the whole congregation. This is not to be undertaken lightly, and in one of the rare cases which occurred in the past the person accused confessed his guilt at the last minute. The father may also be questioned by the Session on whether he holds family devotions, and if not, whether he will do so in future. If he rarely attends church services he is asked to give an assurance that he will do so more regularly after the baptism. If it is known that he visits a public house too often, the desirability of temperance is impressed on him and some kind of promise sought. He is also questioned on the matter of Sabbath observance. The Session also emphasizes the duties of fatherhood and at the same time associates these duties with the need to conform to the standards of the church. If the elders and minister are not satisfied with the father's replies to the interrogation, baptism is refused. He may, however, re-apply for it at a later date, usually the following year. Many of the cases of late baptism seem to have been prompted by the fathers' unwillingness to come before the Kirk Session. The practice is jealously guarded by the elders and minister as one of the strongest weapons of direct control which they possess. Even the close relatives of church officers must present them-selves for examination if they are adherents. Members are in a different position; they are assumed by virtue of their membership to be qualified to have their children baptized. Defaulting behaviour on their part is dealt with by the withdrawal of membership. An adherent who has appeared before the Session once and has not kept his word will be required to present himself for further interrogation before his next child is baptized. Where behaviour is satisfactory, however, permission is given on the second and subsequent occasions without examination by the

Session. There is a tendency to broaden the interpretation of the term 'behaviour' to include defamatory statements and conduct which undermines the work of the minister. The smaller sects are stricter than the Church of Scotland in the matter of granting and refusing baptism; the existence of three separate congregations provides a loophole for the father who is refused baptism by his own church and, as a result, the authority of the Kirk Session is seldom used to the full extent. In practice, however, few persons change their church affiliation for this reason. The interview before the Session becomes instead an occasion on which to reprimand the father personally for any defaulting traits rather than refusing baptism. Where there is only one church, the parents of an illegitimate child may be obliged to stand bareheaded outside the church door while the congregation files in, or, if the Kirk Session requires it, to stand in their pews as an example to the rest of the congregation while the minister delivers an address on the wickedness of their conduct. Following this they are allowed to have the child baptized. Although this procedure was reputed to be very effective in preventing sexual immorality, it could no longer be adopted in a district where there were alternative churches to which the parents could transfer their affiliation.

Church members, being in a position of privilege regarding the most important rite of the religion—the sacrament—can be deprived of this if they are guilty of unsatisfactory conduct. Moreover, the pre-Communion questioning and the 'fencing of the Table' are directed at presenting the question of suitability for the sacrament to the consciences of the members. Defaulters can be deprived of their membership at any time by the Kirk Sessions, and, if this happens, the remaining members are warned against associating unduly with the offenders. In practice the deprivation of membership is comparatively rare, partly because the churches are loath to lose any members, and partly because most members are middle-aged or old and thus fairly well set in their behaviour. But undoubtedly an important fact is that membership is undertaken only after a searching of the heart and is allowed only after exemplary behaviour. A local Church of Scotland member was excommunicated for drunkenness some years ago, but, after a year or so, presented himself for re-admission and was accepted, his behaviour in the meantime having been exemplary. Another instance may be cited which occurred over thirty years ago when a member of one of the smaller sects was deprived of membership for dancing at a wedding. The minister was informed by an elder about the transgression, and a Kirk Session meeting was called. The defaulter continued to attend church after excommunication, but never sought membership again.

Arrangements relating to migrating islanders exist only for members.

For this reason control over emigrants is least when such emigrants are adherents. The churches in the city to which they move are not informed of their arrival, and thus cannot keep an eye on them and see that they attend services, or that they mix with the 'right' people.

Social control by the church, therefore, is only effective where members are concerned because they are the only group personnel who enjoy privileges in the congregation. Since admittance of members is generally very strictly supervised, the control is most effective where it is least required. Adherents' behaviour is influenced in connection with their right to have their children baptized—a form of control which is limited to married adherents (yet most of the frequenters of dances are unmarried). In a church holding the beliefs regarding human nature and society which the Hebridean presbyterian churches hold, complete social control would mean the absence of any secular activities designed solely for recreation; the existence of such secular activities is, indeed, a reflection on the effectiveness of the methods by which control is exercised.

A case can be made out for maintaining that it is the close adherence to the social implications of calvinistic theology and the ensuing powerlessness of the churches to control the content of formal secular social life that has ensured this perpetuation of the traditional styles of dancing and bagpipe-playing, and, to a certain extent, the folk-tale in the Protestant communities.[1] In rural Wales, for example, where the chapels developed a social life of their own, the content of which they were able to control, earlier recreational forms—the folk-dance and folk-tale and many other innocent pursuits—were replaced by the literary meeting, the popular lecture, the chapel eisteddfod, the social and light concert in which choral and solo singing, poetic composition, recitation and similar forms have been fostered.

In brief, the 'Communion Season' is a manifestation of some of the cardinal principles of calvinism, particularly the doctrine of the elect and the sacred/secular dichotomy. In their practical application, these principles have found their expression also in the restricted character of membership and the limitation of church activities to the strictly religious. Considered as a feature of group sociology the 'Communion Season' is a 'rite of intensification' in the sense in which that term is used by the American anthropologists Chapple and Coon, viz. 'the acting out of the ordered interaction of the members' which 'has the effect of reinforcing or intensifying their habitual relationships'.[2] It is a rite which is peculiarly missing

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[1] The Roman Catholic communities of the Hebrides are a different matter with which we are not concerned here.
[2] E. D. Chapple and C. S. Coon, *Principles of Anthropology*, New York, 1942, p. 507.

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(or unemphasized) in many presbyterian churches on the Scottish main-
land where calvinism exists nowadays only in a subdued form and where,
on the one hand, admittance into membership is well-nigh automatic
for all the congregation on reaching a certain age, and, on the other, the
social activities are unrestricted by theological tenets. In Wales, as in
many parts of mainland Scotland, the monthly communion, now a rare
appendage of an ordinary Sunday service, has nothing like the importance
of the Hebridean 'Communion Season'.

The Horseman's Word:
A Rural Initiation Ceremony

Thomas Davidson

AGRICULTURAL trade or craft societies were, until late into the nineteenth century, prevalent over most of Scotland and England. Each trade was quite separate and had their own closely-guarded admission ceremonies, oaths and passwords. The ploughman, or horseman as he was called in Scotland, drover, stockman and thatcher was initiated when he first started work on a farm, and again when he had acquired the 'skills' of the trade and could be considered a journeyman craftsman. Full membership of the appropriate society was the one great event in the life of the farm worker, marking the culmination of a long apprenticeship, and graduation in the craft. The term apprentice is here used loosely, for it must be remembered that no indentured apprenticeship was ever in operation amongst agricultural workers. The plough-boy usually had to go through a form of acceptance test, for example, when setting out on his apprenticeship he was passed over the back, under the belly between the legs of a horse and finally, to ascertain if he was 'plough-boy high' he was passed under the horse's tail.[1] We are here, however, concerned with the society and initiation ceremonies for time-expired ploughmen.

Traces, mainly mutilated fragments from widely scattered sources, can still be found of such a fraternity of ploughmen called the 'Horsemen Society' or the 'Society of the Horseman's Word' which flourished until the end of the nineteenth century. They were fairly evenly distributed throughout Scotland, but particularly in Aberdeen, Perth, Fife and Ayrshire; and at a later date in the eastern counties of England. Their introduction into England was probably due to the influx of Scottish farmers during the second half of the last century.

The nature of the society is one that belongs to and which was propagated orally by the rural craftsmen themselves, so that detailed and accurate information is difficult to obtain. Furthermore, the curious conservatism and closely-guarded methods of the countryman produced a

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[1] *Folk-Lore*, 1940, Vol. LI, pp. 39–40.

form of isolationism which encouraged the creation of a large number of ritual variants, a feature which was further strengthened by the introduction of rigid town and country boundaries. The fragmentary evidence is, however, sufficient to enable us to obtain a fairly clear picture of the initiation ceremonial.

Admission to the society was limited to those over the age of sixteen and under thirty who had the care of horses and had been 'throu the cauf hoose'.[1] The initiation ceremony was carried out in a barn or loft between the hours of eleven at night and one in the morning. The novice had to bring with him a loaf of bread, a bottle of whisky and a candle. The ritual proceedings were conducted by a court of four, seated behind an altar consisting of a bushel, bottom uppermost, pressed hard down upon a sack of corn. The candidate was blindfolded, and brought before the altar, to take the oath of secrecy. There is no evidence extant concerning the precise wording, but 'Hold up your hand and say after me . . .' appears in one record. The most important question put was 'fat are ye needin' maist?' to which the correct answer was 'mair licht'.[2] This answer was presumably meant to indicate enlightenment in the proper care and handling of horses. Burns may have had this in mind when he wrote:

Oft have I met your social band
 And spent the cheerful, festive night,
Oft, honor'd with supreme command
 Presided o'er the *sons of light*
And by that *hieroglyphic* bright
 Which none but Craftsmen ever saw!

The secret password known as the '*Horseman's Word*' was 'Both in One' and it was imparted over 'a grip o' the auld chiel's hand', a stick covered with a hairy skin.[3] In one English version the password known as the *whisper* was given between the 'Collar and the Hames'.[4] The collar is a cushion of leather stuffed with straw and fitting the horse's neck. The hames are metal rods curved to fit the collar and strapped to it. The traces of the shafts are secured to the hames which grip the collar very closely. In both cases the word signifies that there should be complete concord or close connection between the man and the horse he was working.

This password could *reist*, that is, arrest or stop, a man in his tracks; *reist* a plough team so that it became completely immovable; could make a plough plough a rig without a man or horse and could make a horse come

[1] *Scottish Notes and Queries*, 1902, 2nd series, Vol. III, No. 8, p. 123.
[2] *Ibid.*, No. 9, p. 143.
[3] McPherson, *Primitive Beliefs in the North East of Scotland*, 1929, p. 291.
[4] *Folk-Lore*, 1940, Vol. LI, pp. 38–39.

to the possessor of the word. The celebrated wizard Laird of Skene we are told *reisted* a country chiel who had offended him in some way or another:

> An' there he stood as firm's a rock
> For a' that they culd dae,
> Till Skene cam bye an' spake a word
> Which set the ploughman free.[1]

We read, too, that a certain Peter Pairmy, servant to Thomas Mair, minister of the seceding congregation at Orwel, was accused before the Kirk session of *reistin* a wheel-plough. As well as the 'word' he used a wooden rod with which he touched the beam of the plough at the same time 'bidding the plough stop till he should loose it'. The sentence, intimated from the pulpit by Mr. Mair on Sunday, 12th September, 1756, declared him under scandal and ordered him to be publicly rebuked.[2] At the Aberdeen Sheriff Court at the end of the last century a ploughman was summoned for taking a pound from a man to whom he had promised to reveal the *Horseman's Word*, a bargain with which he later refused to comply.[3] To the same word, passed on to a woman in Deeside, was ascribed the awful 'cloddings' she raised about the farm town, a 'clodding' which only ceased after an extraordinary meeting of the horsemen had been convened to stop it.[4]

The power of the *whisper* is commented upon by Casaubon who quotes the case of John Young, in Sussex, in the year 1648, who had the art of attracting and subduing horses. He could control any horse by 'whispering in its ear'.[5] At the end of the eighteenth century in the south of Ireland Sullivan, the Whisperer, was celebrated for his remarkable way with horses, all due, it was said, to the power of the whisper.[6]

This power to control and *reist* a horse may be compared with that possessed by a class of horse charmers known throughout the Ely area, and as late as 1950 in the Peterborough district, as Toadmen.[7] An example dated about 1908 comes from Bourn in Cambridgeshire. A certain man named George —— employed by a blacksmith could do almost anything with horses, calming the most nervous animal with a word. One day a local farmer offended all the men at the smithy by implying that one of them had stolen some money intended for the payment of a bill. George said he would teach him a lesson.

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[1] MacKay, *The Wizard Laird of Skene*, 1886.
[2] *County Folk-Lore*, 1912, Vol. VII, pp. 356–57.
[3] Spence, *Myth and Ritual in Dance, Game and Rhyme*, 1947, p. 159.
[4] McPherson, *op. cit.*, p. 290.
[5] Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland*, 1835, p. 445, quoting Casaubon, *Treatise Proving Spirits*, p. 107.
[6] *Ibid.*, p. 444.   [7] *Folk-Lore*, 1953, Vol. LXIV, pp. 425–26.

A little later the farmer drove up to the forge in a pony-trap. George turned towards the road, took out his handkerchief, and held it to his nose, and replaced it in his pocket. He did no more; but when the farmer was ready to leave, the pony refused to move. In spite of every effort on the farmer's part, the animal remained where it was from nine o'clock in the morning until five o'clock in the afternoon. Then the horse charmer patted its neck, and it went off quite unharmed and unflurried.

When asked by his co-workers how he did it, George said it was by means of a charm. He then proceeded to give, in detail, a version of the ancient charm[1] of the frog's bone that floats upstream.[2]

The presumed object of the society was to impart useful and necessary knowledge in the proper care and management of horses, and should any member find himself in trouble with his horses he could, by giving a sign or password, command the assistance of another brother. The guidance and counsel of older and more experienced horsemen was sought and given on how best to protect their horses from all kinds of natural and supernatural ailments. One of the methods used in the correction of unmanageable horses comes to light in a case reported from Cupar, Fife. Police action was taken at the time on the grounds of cruelty to a mare. At a local initiation meeting where the 'Horseman's Word' (and the oath) between the 'Collar and the Hames' was given, some of the members fastened a running noose round its lower jaw under the lip, buckling up its foreleg and throwing it upon the ground. It was stated that the mare was a bad worker.[3] The secrets communicated to the members were, in the main, magical cures and charms: for example, the use of toads to master horses, the rest probably consisted of the use of common herbs for healing. Communication of the word of power was the climax to the ceremony.

The many points of similarity, even in detail, between the initiation rituals and the 'coven' initiation rites practised by Scottish witches in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are considerable, and could hardly be accidental. The auld chiel—the devil, the solemn vows taken at secret

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[1] To become a Toadman 'Catch a "walking toad" (at Cottenham, a male toad). You may then skin it alive, or peg it to an ant hill and let the ants eat the bones clean. Toads may be plank-hanged, that is to say, they are stretched out at one end of the plank which is balanced on a cross-piece. The other end of the plank is struck with a mallet and the toad is thrown up into the air and lands on the plank with sufficient force to kill it. The bones are then dried while being carried on the person. On a moonlight night at midnight, and all alone, the would-be toadman goes to a stream where he throws in the bones, which let out such screams that only a brave man can stand. One bone, still screaming, points or may even move upstream. This bone must be taken out of the water, and carried about by the toadman who is now in league with the devil. According to one account the toadman must take the bone to the stables at midnight for three nights running, when on the third night he meets the devil, fights him, and draws blood. He is then and not before, a fully fledged toadman.' In Cornwall, also, there is a belief that there is a bone in a frog's body which will cure the wildest horse. *Folk-Lore*, 1953, Vol. LXIV, pp. 425–26.

[2] *Folk-Lore*, 1955, Vol. LXVI, pp. 328–29.

[3] Personal communication from Mr. L. F. Newman, Bishops Stortford.

meetings at midnight, the candles and the feast of bread and whisky, the use of toads and finally the supernatural power of the word, all appear in the witch rituals. It is significant, too, that in the Northamptonshire plough play the performers were called plough-witches,[1] while in Hunting-donshire, they were called plough-witchers and the ceremony known as plough-witching.[2] The power of *reistin* by word or whisper is also assigned to witchcraft. For example, an Orkney crofter after refusing to lend an ox for his neighbour's plough, 'yoked his own, but his oxin wald nather go forward nor backward out of the part. Immediatilie thairefter, the said Robert lent hir the ox, and his oxin did pleu sufficientlie'.[3] In Renfrewshire, Thomas Lindsay, a young lad apprehended on a charge of witchcraft, in 1664, boasted that he would for a halfpenny make a horse stand still in the plough, at the word of command by turning himself widdershins or contrary to the course of the sun.[4] Tradition has it that the laird of Burgie's daughter could, by raising her hand and uttering the word, stop all the ploughs in the neighbourhood. Demonstrating her power one day to her father she successfully arrested all the ploughs except one. It was found that the oxen drawing this plough had concealed about them a pin of rowantree.[5] A Yorkshire witch stopped a ploughing-team in the middle of a field. But the ploughman was prepared, having a whip stick of wickentree (rowantree), with this, he touched his horses in turn and broke the spell, whereupon the old lady gave way in angry rhythmical exclamation:

Damn the lad, wi' the roan-tree gad.[6]

In the Northampton version of the Plough Monday processional, the performers drag a plough from door to door asking for bread, cheese and ale or a contribution in money. If refused they plough up the ground in front of the house. A curious detail comes to light here, the mummers arrogated to themselves an overriding authority and sanction for their action. When remonstrated with for driving the ploughshare into the ground they replied simply 'there's no law in the world could touch them because it's an old charter'.[7]

Now this may be a pointer to some ancient order whose roots go far deeper than the sixteenth-century plough guilds. Lewis Spence suggests that 'it is the mark of a declining craft sodality ... of ploughmen ... founded on the worship or patronage of some god appropriate to the predilection

[1] *Northamptonshire Notes and Queries*, 1890, Vol. 3, pp. 152–53.
[2] Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 157. [3] Dalyell, *op. cit.*, p. 268.
[4] *Narratives of the Sufferings of a Young Girl*, 1698, p. 41.
[5] Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlanders of Scotland*, 1851, pp. 146–47.
[6] *County Folk-Lore*, 1901, Vol. II, p. 60. [7] Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

of the craft which they followed',[1] in other words a fraternity of plough-men founded on the worship of some agricultural deity.

Such a deity existed in Ireland in 'the Mac Cecht' (Son of the Plough), a grandson of the Dagda, god of the soil, and one of the three mythical kings of Erin, who divided the land among them, and who was later superseded on the fall of the Tuatha Dé Danann, the elder race of Ireland, by Airem the 'Ploughman', a Milesian deity whom Rhŷs equates with the British Arthur.[2] Similar in origin may be the plough-horse races at Irvine, Ayrshire, during the Marymass week celebrations. The races are run by the 'Brothered Carters', a band of farm workers made up of Horsemen and apprentices 'belonging to an ancient fraternity of horsemen dating from the 12th century'.[3] The plough has often been regarded as a direct gift from the gods, as, for example, to Osiris in Egypt, and to Zeus or Dionysos, to Pallas or Demeter in Greece. Bishop poses the question 'whether it (plough) was not itself actually of priestly origin, and first employed in the production of sacred crops destined for ceremonial use'.[4] Examples of areas set aside for this purpose are the Rharian Plain near Eleusis dedicated to Jupiter, and the Sacred Field ceremonially ploughed every spring by the Chinese Emperor.[5]

Now the 'Halieman's ley' or 'Guidman's Croft'[6] in Scotland, which was a small plot of land unploughed and dedicated to the devil, in Ireland they were dedicated to the fairies, may have a similar origin. At Killies-mont, in the parish of Keith there was a Goodman's Croft extending from north to south about two hundred yards with a breadth of about twelve yards. At the upper end there was found among a heap of stones a rude cist containing ashes; on Strathairy farm at King-Edward a small urn was dug up containing ashes and surrounding it were numerous stones show-ing marks of fire.[7] These have clearly some ancient religious cult signifi-cance. The sepulchre and sacrificial remains suggest that the Guidman's Croft was originally a place of worship corresponding to the ancient sacred field system in which the tilling and sowing was ritualistic in character and the succeeding crops set aside for ceremonial purposes.

From the evidence it seems by no means improbable that the society of the Horseman's Word had originally a cult significance, and its form as we find it in the nineteenth century, a survival, possibly the final degenerate phase of an ancient craft brotherhood dedicated to an agricul-tural deity who, like a whole pantheon of other ancient divinities, became

[1] Ibid., p. 158.   [2] Ibid., p. 158, quoting J. Rhys, Hibbert Lectures, p. 569.
[3] Sunday Times, 16th August, 1953.   [4] Antiquity, 1936, Vol. X, pp. 264-65.
[5] McPherson, op. cit., p. 88.
[6] Agricultural History Review, 1955, Vol. III, pt. 1, pp. 20-25.
[7] Statistical Account of Scotland, 1793, Vol. XI, p. 408.

identified with the ecclesiastical 'devil' under Christian authority and control. The ceremonial consequently became first confused with and by the early sixteenth century infused into the witchcraft ritual. At this stage the ritual developed along two main lines; one was the Horseman Society and the plough 'streeking' ceremonies carried out on Plough Monday in Scotland. Investigation of the English records of the Society shows that in every case the farm hands involved were of Scottish descent or the farms were tenanted by Scotsmen.[1] The second was due to the influence of the Church in England. Here church fulminations against the practices did little to stop them: instead, those elements avowedly pagan were pushed into the background whilst the remainder were modified and adopted by the Church.

Thus the ritual became more sophisticated and assumed a certain stability as evidenced by the many church plough guilds, plough-play and plough-light ceremonies. Finally, as the Reformation dealt the death blow to all religious guilds, the plough guilds did not escape, and most, if not all, the ceremonial was abolished.[2]

Another factor which contributed to the decline of the ritual was the changing pattern of farming particularly in and around Lincoln and Leicestershire, where the plough-guild and play activities were mainly concentrated. The gradual change from arable to pastoral farming meant the inevitable displacement of the ploughman from his position of first importance on the farm. The result is that in England the ritual is represented by remnants only which have been taken up into rural festivities, costumed procession and folk plays.

In Scotland the authority of the Church and influence of the Reformation was not felt to the same extent in the country areas where the ceremonies were most commonly observed. The absence of plough guilds in Scotland may also be attributed to the prevailing system of small-scale farming and, therefore, to the absence of sufficient numbers of young farm workers to make up the play teams. Consequently the rituals of the ceremony persisted in more or less the same form with secret rites and oaths up to the late eighteenth century. After this the ceremony degenerated into an occasion for mere frolic and horseplay, and midnight rides on purloined horses. This latter escapade no doubt added some substance to the belief in the fairy or hag-ridden mare.

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[1] Personal communication from Mr. L. F. Newman, Bishops Stortford.

[2] The churchwardens' accounts for Holme Pierrepont, in Nottinghamshire, show clearly the effect of this step. In 1552 the parishioners had to pay an assessment tax annually to the church stock because the usual collections 'with hobby horse and light were now prohibited'. *Journal English Folk Dance and Song Society*, 1953, Vol. VII, No. 2, p. 70. And in Leverington, near Wisbech, the Plough-light money was added to the town fund from which villagers could borrow capital. Those who had borrowed during the year had to settle their score 'at ye settynge forthe of ye plowghe every yeare'. *Ibid.*, quoting *Fenland Notes and Queries*, Vol. VII, pp. 184–90.

The fragmentary nature of the evidence, the paucity of information on the ritual, and its precise geographical distribution, do not warrant at this stage any note of finality on the origin of the ceremony. The fact that the Horseman ceremony wholly or in part was so widely scattered shows, however, that it had a considerable importance, and a detailed survey and collection of the remaining but fast disappearing traces would be well worth while.

A great deal might be learnt from such a survey. Apart from being a most rewarding folklore study into origins, light might be thrown on the decline in status of the ploughman relative to other farm crafts, and on the migration of farmers and ploughmen from Scotland into England during the last two centuries.

The Dish of Wheels

J. Geraint Jenkins

THE majority of cart and wagon wheels are considerably dished, or saucer shaped, that is, the wheel is a sectional portion of a cone and not of a cylinder. The spokes in a dished wheel do not emerge from the hub at right angles to its axis, but at an angle, slanting outwards from the centre. When the wheel is hung on the axle arm, the lowest spoke which momentarily takes the weight of the vehicle, is in a perpendicular position, or is at least in a position that is very near the vertical, while the upper part of the wheel overhangs almost to the front of the hub. To produce this the wheel is not only consciously built to a convex shape, but the axle arms are bent downwards towards the ground, so as to ensure a near perpendicular lower spoke (Fig. 1.) That part of the wheel in contact with the ground has to lie in a horizontal plane, and therefore the rim surface formed by the outer edge of the felloe has always to be at right angles to the line of the corresponding spoke. In a dished wheel, this surface would be cone shaped, while the tyres also have to be coned to fit the rim.

As early as the second century B.C. the technique of dishing wheels was known to Chinese wheelwrights, but as far as can be ascertained the practice was unknown in Europe until the fifteenth century A.D., and unknown in Britain until the sixteenth century.

The practice of making dished wheels has given rise to a great deal of controversy. Some writers have advocated it, others have condemned it. James Small, writing in 1784,[1] favours the dished wheel and enumerates the numerous disadvantages of the undished type. When travelling on wet and muddy roads, he says, all the mud taken up by the wheels comes down again on the hub, penetrating through to the axle arm and causing it to wear very greatly. In addition, cylindrical wheels required a great distance in between them, and consequently a great breadth of road was required to accommodate the cart body and load. Above all, the jolting motion of a horse-drawn vehicle would cause the undished wheel to bear hard upon the inner side of the axle arm, and the spoke tenons in the hub would be strained considerably. By dishing the wheels and bending the

[1] Small, James, *A Treatise on Ploughs and Wheel Carriages* (1784), p. 200.

axle arms downwards, these disadvantages, according to Small, would be eliminated. The mud would fall well clear of the hub, there would be
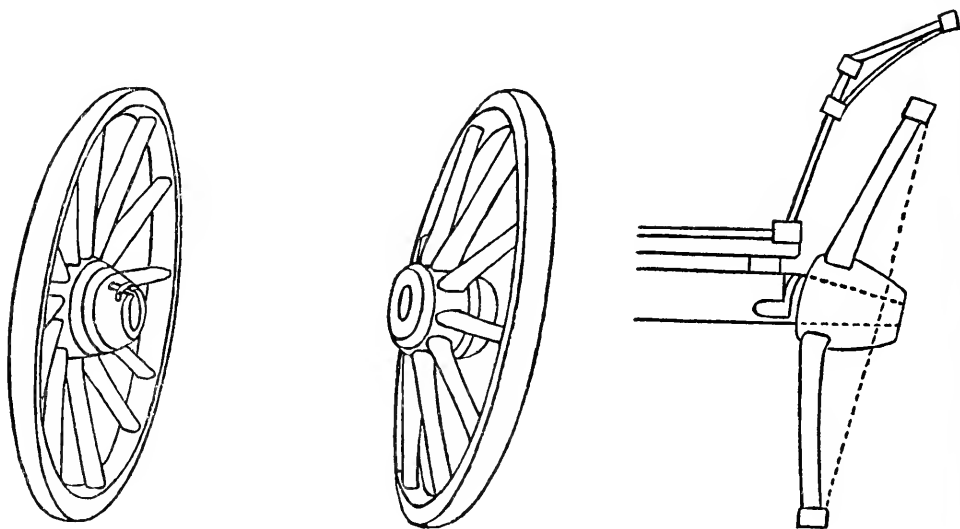

FIG. 1. A DISHED WHEEL

greater room for the body, and the wheels would be considerably strengthened by setting the spokes against the jolts of lateral movement. Small reckoned that for every wheel with a diameter of 4 ft. 8 ins. the dish should be 3.5 ins., or 0.75 in. for every foot of diameter.

George Sturt[1] says that dish was necessary to keep the wheel from being knocked inside out when the body of the vehicle swings against the inner side of the hub, with the side-to-side movement of the horses. He adds that dish contributed to heavier and bulkier loads, and it was convenient that the wheels were farther apart at the top than they were at ground level. Sturt's main reason for dishing was, however, a structural one. The dished wheel was able to bear lateral thrust, produced by the side-to-side movement of the horse-drawn vehicle, and also by the jolting movement produced by the wheel when it fell into a rut.

Undoubtedly dishing did contribute to strength, but Sturt's explanation fails to show why some wheels are dished more than others, and some wheels are dished hardly at all. A Dorset wagon at the Museum of English Rural Life, Reading, has small wheels that are completely undished, yet it seems to have stood up to eighty years' work on deeply rutted farm tracks without the collapse of the wheels. Experienced

[1] Sturt, G., The Wheelwright's Shop (1923), pp. 91–95.

wheelwrights shake their heads at Sturt's explanation, for although, they say, the side-to-side movement of the horses does occur, it has very little effect on the four-wheeled wagon. There are wagons, especially the boat wagons of the early-twentieth century, which had undished wheels, yet they seem to have stood up to many years of heavy work on deeply rutted roads. On closer examination, however, it may be found that although these modern wheels are not dished, this is compensated by the fact that the spokes are not set in the hub in line, as in the older wheels, but are staggered. In the same way as dish, this construction has a buttressing effect on the moving vehicle. Half the spokes are set at right angles to the hub, while the other half provides the dish.

It seems, therefore, that from the point of view of strength some form of dish is desirable, although the wheel need not, of necessity, be conical. The Dorset wagon, mentioned above, is extremely wide, the axle beds are very long, and the complete absence of dish suggests that it is a feature which contributes to the width of the body, rather than to the strength of the wheels. The fact that wagon wheels overhang considerably at the top means that the body can be wide, without a corresponding width of axle. With cylindrical wheels, on the other hand, the axle bed has to be much longer to accommodate a wide body.

It is probable that pre-sixteenth-century British vehicles did not have dished wheels, or at least there is no evidence to suggest that they had. Early vehicles were on the whole lighter and smaller than the more recent ones, and consequently the weight they were able to carry was far less. Even so their load carrying capacity was surprisingly small when compared with the heavy carts and wagons of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Although Roman and medieval carts were smaller, the evidence suggests that they were not all that much smaller than their modern counterparts. Yet they were able to carry less than half the weight of modern horse-drawn vehicles. Xenophon in the *Cyropedia* and various clauses in the Theodosian Code[1] fix the net load of a light wagon (rhaeda) as 680 English pounds, or a little over 6 hundredweights. The heavy wagon (Angeria or clabula) could carry a load of 1,002 English pounds, or a little under 9 hundredweights. The weight carried by these vehicles was far less than that carried even by the smallest English wagon or cart. The reason for this may partly lie in the limited draught power of the oxen or horses, but even so it is unlikely that this factor alone explains the lightness of early vehicles. It is possible that there were structural reasons relating to the strength of the axle and wheels, which placed a limit on the size of vehicles. From medieval illustrations and the archaeological finds of an earlier period, wheels were completely undished and cylindrical in

[1] Usher, A. P., *A History of Mechanical Inventions* (1954), p. 155.

shape. The same is true of modern Scandinavian vehicles, which are also much narrower in the body than their English counterparts. It follows that the axle arms of these vehicles are straight and untapered. In a vehicle with these features the point of greatest stress lies on the axle bed, between the inner side of the nave and the bottom of the cart or wagon body. Due to this matter of strength it was not desirable to build a larger vehicle which was very wide in the body, and the evidence suggests that this factor of weakness explains why modern Scandinavian wagons and medieval vehicles were very much narrower than eighteenth- or nineteenth-century English wagons.

In medieval England, farming conditions did not provide the incentive for improvements in agricultural machinery or transport, but with the gradual substitution of the manorial system by a system of individual land holding, the necessary incentive for improvement was present. Better implements were necessary to till the larger amount of land held by each agriculturist; better and larger vehicles were required to carry the increased products of the land to the market towns. It was the age of improvement, and wheelwrights, in common with other craftsmen, set out to improve their techniques and methods, and among the numerous improvements to vehicles in the sixteenth century, the dishing of wheels was introduced. By deliberately bending the axle arm downwards, and making conical wheels, larger vehicles could be built. In addition the weight of a loaded wagon or cart could be imparted more directly to the bottom spoke, with much less tendency for the axle arm to break off at its root. By dishing the wheel, therefore, the stress is distributed throughout the wheel and axle, rather than to be concentrated at one point.

There is overwhelming evidence that dishing is desirable from a structural point of view. The practice is not limited to the British Isles, but it is far more pronounced on British vehicles than it is on any other. The reason for this may lie in the field of government legislation, for although Government Acts may not have been prime factors in determining dish, they almost certainly explain the very pronounced dish on some of the older wagon wheels. By an Act of 1773, it was said that no carriage using broad wheels should make a track of more than 68 inches in width. Although this Act fixed the distance that wagon wheels were allowed to be apart at the bottom, it did not mention the top of the wheels. The farmers, carriers and wheelwrights overcame this restriction by dishing their wheels very greatly, so that although they conformed to the legal distance at the bottom they were wide apart at the top. This still left room for a capacious body. Wilkinson, in his *Highways and Byeways in England*, says that for this reason, wheels were sometimes so dished that they were as much as seventeen inches out of the perpendicular. Although the Act

of 1773 related specifically to broad-wheeled vehicles, the narrow-wheeled type would also tend to be the same width, due to ease of traction on an already flattened track.

John Rickman, in the Preface to the *Life of Thomas Telford*, summarizes the disadvantages of the undished wheel as follows:

'Such wheels limit the breadth of the load above; they are awkward in turning, and do not possess the advantage resulting from the outward slope of the upper part of the felly of a dished wheel, whereby in mutual collision with another carriage, the conflicting wheels yield gradually, and prevent any violent shock of the naves, thus protected. Dished wheels also possess a greater strength of construction, for the felly being compressible owing to the slant of the spokes which support it, is strained tight by the contraction of the iron tilt in covering, and being thereby kept in a state of tension, is not liable to become loose in the joints, and those wheels are capable of resisting shocks upon a rough roadway. A wheel falling into a cavity or rut receives from the sloping load, not only an extra pressure, but also a lateral thrust; the tendency of which is to force the nave outwards through the felly; but the nave of a dished wheel resembles the crown of an arch, bearing upon the felly as a base, which cannot be extended, because being of a circular figure, it admits of no extension while entire, thus the felly is equivalent of the abutments of this arch, or rather to the tie beam of a trussed frame. The only upright wheels which have been at all successful contain the above principle in their construction; they are of iron and each of them resembles a pair of dished wheels set face to face, but even these are not now made perfectly upright or cylindrical.'

Despite the weighty evidence in support of dish, such wheels were for some reason objectionable in the eyes of Parliament. The main basis for the objection was the fact that they broke up the road surface much more than cylindrical wheels, and all eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century acts were concerned with the preservation of roads by legislating against certain types of wheels. An Act of 1822, for example, forbade dished wheels, and states, 'that in each pair of wheels belonging to such carriages, the lower parts when resting on the ground shall be at the same distance from each other as the upper parts of the such pairs of wheels'. This proviso would prevent the use of dish, but significantly agricultural vehicles were exempted from the requirements of the Act. This suggests that for the carriage of heavy agricultural products on the rutted tracks of the farm, dish was necessary. The Act was repealed by the Highways Act of 1835.

The Government Report of 1809 is equally insistent in its objections to the conical wheel, and it mentions no structural reasons why it is stronger than the cylindrical type; indeed, the only objection to the cylindrical wheel is that it limited the width of the cart or wagon body. The main objection to the conical wheel was, of course, its tendency to break up the surface of the road. Such wheels were usually treble tyred, and by an Act of 1776 (16 Geo. III) the central tyre was allowed to project

one inch more than the other two. On hard roads, such wheels would run on a single tyre iron and would bear the whole weight of the load; in effect, conical wheels on hard roads would resemble a narrow-tyred vehicle, rather than a broad-wheeled vehicle which the law demanded. The observations of the committee on the respective merits of cylindrical and conical wheels were as follows:

'1. That when the wheels are very narrow, then there is little difference in the power required to draw the same load.

2. In conical wheels, the power required to draw the same load is considerably increased by increasing the breadth of wheels, and that all the increase of the labour of the cattle is applied to the destruction of the road.

3. On cylindrical wheels, the same power draws the carriage upon smooth roads with equal ease, whether the wheels be broad or narrow, but by the use of such broad wheels, the roads, instead of being destroyed, are consolidated and improved.

4. That great fluctuations take place in the power necessary to draw the same load on conical wheels, according to the circumstances of the wheel bearing the narrow parts of its rim.

5. No such difference of resistance happens under the same circumstances with the cylindrical broad wheel.

6. From every circumstance the cylindrical wheel is preferable to the conical in every state of the roads, and in whatever state they may be the cylindrical improves and the conical impairs them.

7. . . . As regards the preservation of the roads and the labour of the cattle, the cylindrical shape of the wheel is preferable to any other possible shape, it being the only one that has the same velocity at every part of its rim, and that has no dragging or rubbing, nor any tendency to grind or derange the materials, nor to leave the surface of the road in a condition to imbibe or to admit water.'

It must be remembered that this Committee was concerned with the preservation of the road surface, and although they recommended the adoption of the cylindrical wheel in preference to the conical, they presented no evidence that the dished wheel was structurally inferior to the cylindrical.

At a later date Stratton condemns the dished wheel, and says:

'We have not space to enter fully into the mechanical operations of coned wheels. Suffice here to say that a small expenditure of judgment will satisfy anyone that a wheel, with the hub cutting and rubbing in the axle tilt on the shoulder, must not only prove detrimental to the axle tilt, but require more strength to move it, indeed taxes the horse beyond endurance. Such a monstrosity is beneath the contempt of modern mechanism, and is only introduced here to show its absurdity.'

A Welsh Court of Estrays

FRANK PRICE JONES

IT was at the invitation of the Steward that I attended, although as
a native-born burgess of the *caput* of the lordship I probably have a
right—indeed, possibly a duty—to do suit at the Court of Estrays of
Denbiland.

This Lordship of Denbigh, which in modern terms includes most of
west Denbighshire, was created in 1282 by Edward I to reward his friend
Henry de Lacy, Earl of Lincoln, for his services in the campaign which
ended in the downfall of the last independent Prince of Wales. Down the
centuries, the lordship changed owners frequently, and we still feel a slight
swelling of pride as we recount the names of prominent figures in English
history who were, from time to time, seised of this honour. Even
Elizabeth's Leicester appears as an asset in our modern guide books,
though his name stank in the nostrils of our ancestors, his contemporaries.

By Leicester's time, the lordship was already declining in importance,
for by the Acts of Union of 1536 and 1542–43, it had been arbitrarily
joined with three other lordships to form the foolishly-shaped modern
shire. Yet, for another century or so, it remained a recognizable unit,
and it was one of the gifts which Dutch William tried to grant to his
friend, the Duke of Portland.

By to-day, only one institution remains to remind us of the glory
that was Denbiland: the Court of Estrays of the Crown Lordship or Manor
of Denbigh, presided over by the Steward of the Lordship.

The Steward is a grand old boy. He boasted to me (in 1954) that he
was seventy-five years of age, but he has not yet got around to thinking
about a successor in office. He has enjoyed—and he *has* enjoyed—the
Stewardship himself for only six or seven years, but he has done duty as
deputy steward for over half a century. His main duty is performed at
this Court of Estrays: for four hours on the last Saturday in July every
year, he moves benignly among the crowd of farmers who gather at *Y Siêt
Ddefaid* (*lit.* 'the escheat of sheep') as the Court is always called by them.

Formerly the court was held regularly in the town of Denbigh, but
since the 1939–45 war, it has become peripatetic, being held at Denbigh,
Llansannan and Gwytherin in turn. These last two places are very small

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villages, indeed one of them, Gwytherin, hardly a hamlet, in the moorland country of Hiraethog, which is called by the 'bus people and visitors, the 'Denbigh Moors'. The traditional hatred of the Welshman for the Norman-created borough survives in the opinion so often expressed in these villages, that 'the *Siêt* is always better here than in the town'.

On the last Saturday in July 1954, as I dropped down the steep, narrow road into Gwytherin from the west (for alas! I am a non-resident burgess), a group of farmers and the lads of the village were standing around a barn on the cross-roads there. The Steward had not yet arrived—he was coming up from Denbigh—so that I had no one to vouch for me. I cannot believe that my appearance is very different from theirs, and my Welsh is certainly of the same variety and quite as good as theirs. Yet, I was a stranger there.

We chatted quite civilly, of course, but from time to time one or two would break away from our group and go to inquire of a nearby group who was this stranger . . . a man from the B.B.C. perhaps? . . . but no, he hasn't any recording gear. A newspaper man perhaps? . . . or very likely a Government inspector. So it went on while more farmers arrived, and among them were the three men who were to be empanelled as judges, or more correctly as jurymen.

Then came the Steward, his smiling face lit up by a huge red carnation in his button-hole. He saw me, and called out—in English—that he was glad that I had managed to come. For some unknown reason (but perhaps it is because I am a 'town boy') he always speaks to me in English, but in spite of this, his greeting made quite a difference to my standing in the assembly. I was now 'something to do with the *Siêt*'. (Later on, after I had told them who my father and grandfather were, I was 'admitted into full membership'.)

We moved into the barn where already a table and two armchairs had been set for the Steward and me, and three ordinary chairs for the jury. A ladder was slung across the wide doorway and the 'suitors' crowded behind it in the open, looking in.

The three jurymen came in, took off their caps and reached out their right hands to touch a copy of the Gospels (in the English version, I afterwards noticed) while the Steward administered to them their oath, in Welsh. They promised 'diligently to inquire into all matters set before them . . . presenting nothing from hatred nor malice, neither hiding anything for the sake of love, fear nor kindness . . .'. Each then kissed the book and took his place on the chair.

The two bailiffs of the lordship were called, and reported that they had impounded, during the last twelve months, twenty-eight stray sheep and lambs. A man, who for lack of an official title, I must call the usher,

meanwhile went around the public with a basket into which all those who had lost sheep and who would perhaps later make a claim, put a piece of paper with a drawing of the earmarks of the sheep they had lost. This basket, half-full of papers, was placed on the table.

Only now were the sheep brought into the open; hitherto they had been kept in a locked stable so that no one should examine and copy their earmarks. Now, however, the possible claimants had committed themselves by the marks they had made on the papers in the basket, and the sheep were driven into an open pen near the barn door. Those who had lost sheep examined them, and when they saw one which they thought was theirs, they, with the bailiffs, brought it out, tied its legs and dragged it under the ladder before the judges.

Quietly the three jurymen examined the sheep. One of them, the youngest I should think, had a book in his pocket in which he had copied the earmarks of most of the farms in the Lordship. He referred to this occasionally. All three jurymen paid careful attention to the earmarks of each sheep before them, but the oldest of them was even more thorough in his examination of the sheep itself, its condition, age and so on.

They then asked the claimant a few questions: when had the sheep strayed, what were the earmarks of his farm, did he usually make any mark on the fleece of the sheep. All of them seemingly innocent questions, yet they would certainly entrap anyone foolish enough to try to deceive these three farmers turned judges.

All this took about five minutes, and then the jury made its award. If the claimant had made good his claim, he 'made fine' at ten shillings a head, and was allowed to take away his recovered sheep.

In all, eight sheep were successfully claimed, but two cases took up considerably more time than the others. In one of them, both the sheep and the claimant were obviously 'foreigners'. The sheep was clearly (at least to the jurymen if not to me) a Montgomeryshire sheep, and the claimant was a man from Caernarvonshire! He was not claiming for himself, but for a Montgomeryshire farmer whose earmarks he had recognized on this particular sheep. The jurymen were politely curious about this strange situation. Was he a friend of the Montgomery man? No, he wasn't, but he was quite certain about the earmarks, for he had noticed them at various sheep auctions.

But how was it that a sheep from distant Montgomeryshire had managed to stray into this part of Denbighshire?

That was easily explained: the Caernarvonshire man knew for certain that the Montgomery farmer used to send his sheep to 'keep' in these parts (i.e. he sent them here to pasture on other farms).

Oh! Well in that case it was quite possible for this strange sheep to be found wandering here.

In the meantime, the three jurymen had been carefully, though unobtrusively, sizing up the claimant, and they finally decided that he had made good his claim. He 'made fine' and took out the sheep, which he would no doubt return to its owner and recover the fine he had paid.

Another case brought out the value of the examination of the sheep itself by the oldest juryman. The sheep in this case was, apparently, a very old ewe, and her earmarks were not those of the man who claimed her, but belonged to a farm higher up in the hills. The claimant got over this difficulty by explaining that he had bought some ewes from the hill farm 'early this year'.

'But you didn't buy this one this year', said the old juryman. The claimant was nonplussed, and the old juryman continued: 'No hill farmer would keep a ewe to this age—he would have sold her a couple of years ago'.

The claimant saw the point and explained further that he had bought ewes from the same farm every year, and that possibly, indeed very likely, this ewe was one of those he had bought two years since.

He appeared to me, at least compared with the three jurymen, an inexperienced sheep farmer, and there was just a hint of a sneer as the oldest juryman conceded that it might be as the claimant said. For his own part, he seemed to imply, he would most certainly know when he had bought any single one of his sheep. The poor old ewe was rather contemptuously awarded to the claimant who was 'ammerced' and then took her out. As he went, the 'usher' came up with a brush and 'tidied up' the space before the jury, a service which called forth praises from the old man, who said that this was the first time in his twenty years' service for anyone to show such deference and respect for the jury!

Twenty sheep and lambs remained unclaimed, and to dispose of them, the Steward, who is granted that right by an Act of the 1820's, became for the time being, an auctioneer. But the auction was soon over, for by this time it was past lunch-time, and the 'suitors' were stretching out their hands for the lunch tickets which the Steward had brought with him. Most of us had a ticket, and we hurried off to the school where the free lunch was laid out on a long table.

Lunch over, the Steward announced (with possibly just a hint of apology) that since the Queen was the Lady of the Manor, we would sing 'God Save the Queen', and then the National Anthem. (We could not have 'strong drink' in the village school, so to toast the Queen was out of the question.) Right loyally we sang 'God Save the Queen' and then burst

out into *Hen Wlad fy Nhadau*, a little girl who had come in with her father joining in this, while she obviously did not know 'God Save the Queen'.

For the next hour, we listened to some of the local children reciting poetry and singing *penillion*, and two of us made speeches in which the antiquity of the *Siêt* was lauded.

There was something incongruous in this linking of a nineteenth-century Band of Hope type of concert with the medieval Norman Court of Estrays, and yet it illustrates an important truth in the cultural history of Wales. And that is that whatever innovations have been introduced here, at least up to the end of the last century, what is useful in them has been completely absorbed and 'made Welsh'.

The Court of Estrays is probably Norman in origin (though it may have been a continuation of an earlier, native commote court), and the proceeds of the fines and the sale of the unclaimed sheep go to the Receiver for Crown Lands in Wales. But in so far as the institution has any functional and social value, it is completely Welsh. The language of its proceedings is Welsh, and the complicated earmarks, so far as I know, have no English descriptions. The ancient machinery of Steward, bailiffs and court has survived only because it suits the convenience of the Welsh farmers of the district, and the pompous, alien title and the time-honoured procedure seemed very superficial in the classless atmosphere of Gwytherin. Indeed, the Usher, who had been so useful with the brush earlier on, rather gave the show away when, after lunch he thanked us all for coming to Gwytherin at all, and brightening up, at least once every three years, their rather dull Saturday afternoons.

What happened afterwards in the 'Red Lion' is nobody's business.[1]

[1] The officials serving the Court of Estrays of the Crown Lordship of Denbigh held at Gwytherin on 31st July, 1954, were: *Steward*: Evan E. Roberts, Denbigh. *Bailiffs*: John Williams and Hugh Parry. *Jurymen*: Joseph Davies, Nant y Merddyn, Llansannan; William Thomas Parry, Ffyrdd Gleision, Nebo; Robert Evans, Bro Dawel, Saron. '*Usher*': William Jones, Gwytherin.

Notes

Derbyshire Well-Dressing

An extremely interesting example of folk art flourishes in the Peak district of Derbyshire. Here is practised the art of well-dressing, or well-flowering,[1] as some prefer to call it. A fascinating lore and artistic technique is associated with the custom.

The decorating of springs and wells with floral designs is an art or craft kept up only in Derbyshire, although there are suggestions that somewhat similar practices occurred in other parts of the country in former times. How the decorating of wells began and how old the practice is, antiquarians can only surmise. It may, indeed, have pagan origins—Sir James G. Frazer in his great book, *The Golden Bough*, tells of the water spirit which frequented springs and had to be propitiated—but became essentially a religious festival. For instance, at Tissington, which is accepted as the mother-place of well-dressing in its present form, the ceremony of decorating the five springs round the village green is always held on Ascension Day. At Wirksworth the original festival was held on Whitsuntide Wednesday. If well-dressing was a pagan rite, it seems not unreasonable to believe that with the coming of Christianity open-air services were held near springs to give thanks for the precious, life-giving gift of water.

There is a tradition that the custom of well-dressing at Tissington dates from A.D. 1350. At this time the 'Black Death' laid its dread hand on the area, but Tissington remained immune from the scourge, and it was believed this was due to the purity of the water of the five springs. Another tradition gives A.D. 1615 as the origin of the custom; in this year there was widespread drought, but Tissington's wells never failed. Such events may have focused attention upon the springs, but there is every likelihood that the custom had an even earlier origin.

The value of a sure and pure water supply in the limestone areas of Peakland is readily apparent to those who know anything of the geology of limestone formations. Limestone is deeply fissured and honeycombed with subterranean channels and cavities: streams, therefore, have a habit of appearing and disappearing with disconcerting abandon and springs abruptly flow and dry up. Small wonder, then, under such fickle

[1] For the tradition in Wales, see Francis Jones: *The Holy Wells of Wales* (Cardiff, 1954).—Ed.

hydrologic conditions, a never-failing well was a source of wonder and something to be cherished.

At the present day elaborately worked floral screens are erected over the wells, but this practice would appear to be relatively recent: Nicholas Hardinge, writing in 1758, tells us, 'At Tissington . . . we saw the spring adorned with garlands'. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, the present technique of 'picturing' had made its appearance, for Edward Rhodes wrote in 1818 that though most of the wells were decked with wreaths and posies of fresh flowers, 'sometimes boards are used'.

The present-day pictures or screens consist of shallow wooden trays or frames with parallel laths or, sometimes, nails driven through the back, to act as 'keys' for the soft puddled clay which is plastered into the tray. The clay is very carefully prepared being kneaded into a butter-like consistency and mixed with salt: this is to keep the clay moist and prevent it from cracking. The next stage in the procedure is the drawing of the picture, usually of religious significance. A competent artist will draw directly upon the clay with a scriber; the less skilled use a full-size paper drawing which is placed over the clay, the outlines then being pricked through.

Finally comes the decorating of the screen. The dressing is usually done by one artist, whose helpers have culled from garden, field and hedgerow the materials to be used. The picture is 'painted' by sticking flower heads, individual petals, leaves, bits of bark, fir cones, moss, etc. into the clay. Strangers, seeing the preparatory work and spying piles of torn, dismembered flowers have been heard to cry: 'What a waste of flowers!' But, these self-same folk have marvelled when, later, they have seen the beautifully and cunningly executed designs which look like living pieces of exquisite tapestry. The artists are nothing if not ingenious: parsley produces lush green grass, hazel catkins give the effect of tumbling water, pansy petals rich violet velvet, holly berries make glowing rubies, buttercups glistening gold, and beans produce the reality of masonry! Occasionally shells and coloured pebbles are used, but in most villages where well-dressing is carried on there is a strict rule that only natural things be used.

The dressing is done in stages and there is a correct order. First to be done are those parts of the picture which do not fade or wither—the parts composed of bark, twigs, fir cones, sand, etc.; second, those portions which, if they fade, matter little, such as the background of moss; and, finally, all the glowing, colourful effects produced by blossoms and petals. These vivid and colourful pictures are breath-taking; unfortunately, they fade very quickly, and their beauty is transient. As Crichton Porteous,

who has written an enchanting book on *The Beauty and Mystery of Well-Dressing*, says: 'Unless a newly dressed well has been seen, it is impossible to appreciate the freshness and beauty which can be got into the work'.

The art was widely practised in the limestone area of Derbyshire in former times, and continues to flourish at Wirksworth, Barlow, Buxton, Tideswell, Stoney Middleton, Bonsall, Cutthorpe and Youlgrave as well as Tissington. The celebrations take place during the months of May and June, each village having a particular date for the holding of the festival. Hitherto, well-dressing was practised at Baslow, Pilsley, Makeney, Middleton, Marston Montgomery, Wynaston, and Clowne as records show. One hopes this unique folk art will never die out, and if the enthusiasm of the well-dressers is anything to go by, we can be assured that the craft will continue to be practised for a long, long time to come.

H. ROBINSON.

Some Bean-Setting Dibbles

In 1939 the late Dr. Oliver Wild of Cheltenham published in the Cotswold Naturalists Field Club a paper 'On a Form of Dibble Formerly used for Bean-setting in the Vales of Gloucestershire and Worcestershire'. In this article he drew attention to one of the most interesting smaller articles of husbandry ever used in this country. The usual dibber is made from the top twelve or fifteen inches of the wooden handle of some discarded tool to which a point is added, and the dibber is complete. In this form it has been known down the ages, and is even illustrated in a book entitled *The Gardener's Labrynth*, which was published in 1651.

Dr. Wild writes that he found a portion of a dibble at Minsterworth, Gloucestershire, in 1933, and goes on to say that 'this had an interesting modification, viz., the addition of sockets on either side of the main pin for the reception of the forefinger and thumb of the hand. Since then I have acquired six perfect examples and examined several other specimens. All were found in the vicinity of the Severn Valley in Gloucestershire and Worcestershire'.

Two of the specimens seen by Dr. Wild were in my own collection and were found in Gloucestershire. Marshall, in his *Rural Economy of Gloucestershire*, vol. I, p. 144, under the heading 'Pulse', gives a good description of this type of dibble with an account of its use. Pulse includes both peas and beans, but Marshall states (p. 142) 'But in the area of the Vale few peas are grown except among beans which are throughout the prevailing crop'. Dr. Wild is right, therefore, in concluding that the tool described by Marshall was mainly used for the setting of beans. Marshall
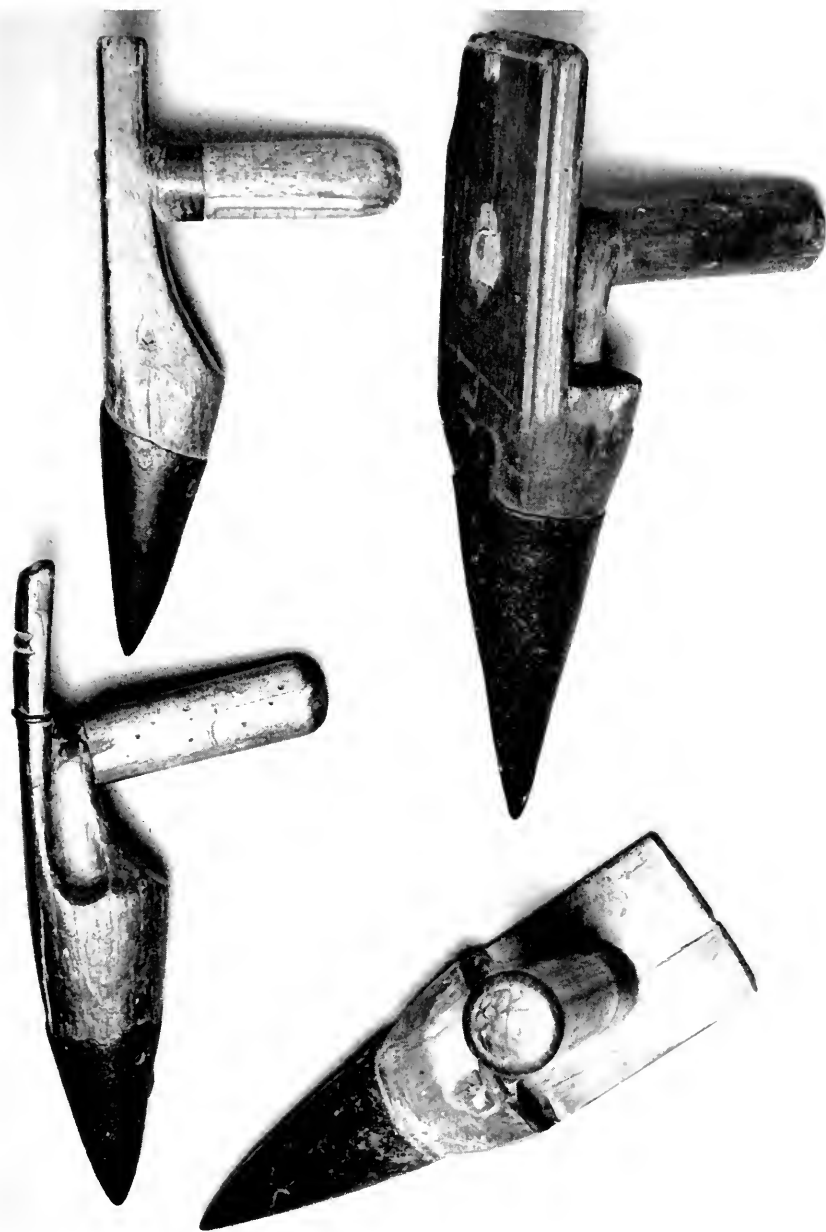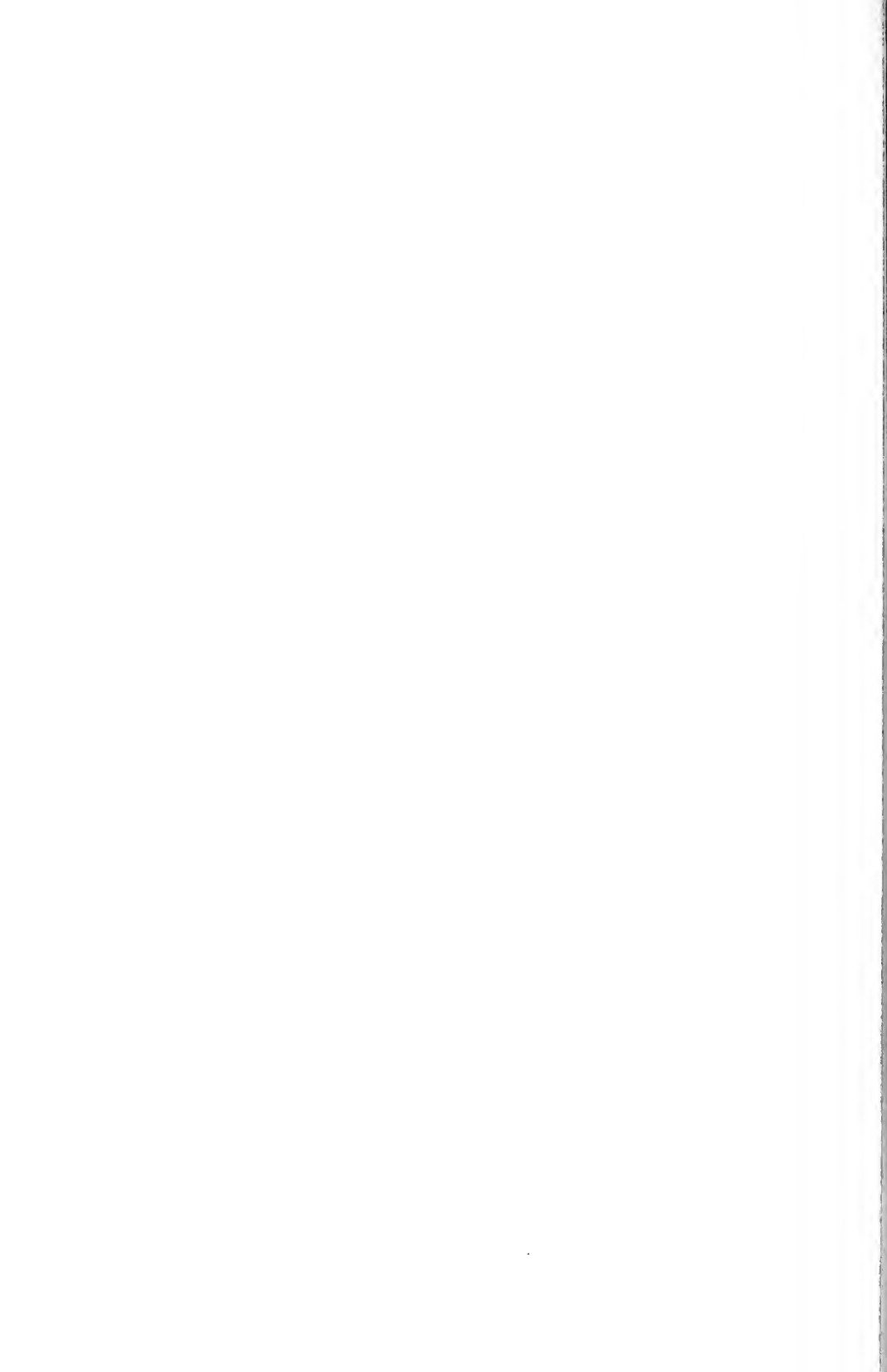
Photo: *National Museum of Wales (Welsh Folk Museum)*

PLATE 1. BEAN-SETTING DIBBLES

goes on as follows: 'Each setter is furnished with a setting pin, and a tacking namely a satchell (hung before by a string round the waist) to carry the beans in. The setting pin resembles the gardener's dibble with, in general, however, a valuable improvement: a cross pin or half crutch near the top, to rest the palm upon, with a groove on each side of the main pin to receive the forefinger and the thumb. The length of the dibble (which is about two inches square in the middle tapering conically to a sharp point) is about eight inches: of the handle about four. In setting the women walk sideways to the right with their faces towards the ground which is set: the last row, therefore, is immediately under the eye, and the difficulty of setting another row nearly parallel with it, is readily overcome by practice. An expert hand will set with almost inconceivable rapidity'.

Marshall gives much information about the cultivation of beans in the late eighteenth century in Gloucestershire, and one gathers that women were invariably employed in setting beans. The quantity of seed used was from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 3 bushels an acre, and the price of setting was sixteen to eighteen pence per bushel, costing from 3s. 6d. to 4s. 6d. an acre. At my old home, Bentham Manor, near Cheltenham, as many as ten to fifteen women were employed bean-setting in one field, and they were paid by the bushel. This was as late as 1880.

Dr. Wild gives a detailed description of the six dibbles in his collection. These at his death were, with his extensive collection of local byegones, presented by his widow to the City of Gloucester and may now be seen in the City's Folk Museum at Hooper House. So much for the dibble in Gloucestershire. In 1948, however, I picked up an example of the same form of dibble, though one slightly larger in size, at a farm sale near Monmouth, and a year later I found another in Herefordshire. This also has some slight variations in comparison with the two examples from Gloucestershire which are illustrated in the top row of Plate 1. The Herefordshire specimen, bottom row left, has a greater breadth and a more squat appearance. This example carries an old label with some initials on and the date 1824. This fact might lead one to think that even at that date this type of dibble was of personal interest and possibly becoming scarce. The Hereford City Museum also have two specimens similar to the one in my collection.

The Monmouthshire example (right bottom row in plate) is larger in every respect being 10. 4in. in length and with an overall height of 4. 8in. The four examples are all made of ash[1] and shod with pointed iron ferrules. The handles have all been turned and are fixed with wooden dowel pins, while the ferrules are secured by iron nails. It is therefore safe to assume that this form of bean dibble was in use also in Herefordshire and that it

[1] Dr. Wild had one in cherry and another made from a crab-tree root.

even strayed over the border into Monmouthshire, but it does not, how-
ever, appear to be found in the neighbouring Welsh counties and there
are no examples in the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans.

The setting of beans was hard work, and was apt to chafe the hand of
the setter. This type of dibble was designed therefore to eliminate chafing
as far as possible, for as Dr. Wild writes, 'Craftsmanship co-ordinated
with utility and a love of embellishment stimulated some inventive genius
to create one of the most interesting tools to be found in the English
countryside'.

It would be interesting to know whether this type of dibble has been
noted in counties other than those mentioned. The author is indebted
to the Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans, for the photograph of his four
examples.

<div style="text-align: right">H. J. LLOYD-JOHNES.</div>

Bull-Fronts as Church hassocks, up to the mid-nineteenth century

The botanical name is *Aira caespitosa* and a common colloquial name in
the north of England is 'Bull-Fronts'. It is interesting to note that in
E. Peacock's *Lincolnshire Glossary* (1876), he gives 'Bull hassocks; large
round tufts of grass standing above the level of a field. There is a place
in the Isle of Axholme called Bull Hassocks.' Prevost's *Cumberland
Glossary* includes three local names, i.e. Bull-toppings, Bull fronts, and
Bull-feeses. Brocket, in *North Country words* (1829), gives only Bull-front
with the latter name added. Canon Atkinson's *Cleveland Glossary* has this
note: 'Bull-faces (pronounced Bull-feeaces), the tufty hair grass called
also, as it appears from Hall, Bulls-fronts and Bulls foreheads, probably
from some supposed resemblance between the manner of its tufty growth
and that of the hair on a bull's forehead'.

The Church hassocks are easy to make, though tough to dig up and
they were never, so far as I know, covered with anything. Only the very
largest tussock will make a good hassock. There is no likely connection
between the word 'hassock' and 'tussock'.

The late Rev. R. Kettlewell, in 1938, writing his history of the Parish of
Great Ayton, found an early eighteenth-century Church charge of 2*d*. each
for 'Bull-front kneelers'. Within the last decade an old man of Lealholm
Roman Catholic Church said: 'You owt ti hev a hassock: there's nowt
mair comfortabler ti kneel on than owd bull-front. Before we had a chetch
here, there was two or three of t'owd hands at Ugthorpe had bull-fronts i'
their pews. I haven't seen one used for forty years or mair'. E. G. Lowe
(*British Grasses*, 1864) states that doormats and basses are made of the *hay*

of *Aira C.* (my underline). L. F. Salzman, C.B.E., President of the Sussex Archaeological Society, tells me that the village of Hassocks in that County is a newish settlement and was named after the field of that name, and that the field name derived from the number of tussocks growing there of tufted hair grass. Also, I used to see doormats made in like manner from flat sods of Mat Grass (*Nardus Stricta*) in north-west Yorkshire, some sixty years ago. I am obliged to Mr. Fairfax-Blakeborough for help in this research. The only original ones still left, to my knowledge, in England are in the *old* thatched church in Icklingham, near Newmarket.

N. TEULON-PORTER.

Danfon Offrwm

An interesting example of communal self-help in time of trouble survives in the quarrying districts of Caernarvonshire.

When a death occurs in one of the families of a district, the neighbours arrange to call at the house, while the corpse is still there, *i ddanfon offrwm*, 'to take their offering'. In the Rhiwlas area, the most common offering appears to be two shillings or half a crown, but in Deiniolen, the usual sum is considerably larger.

My informant told me that she usually arranged to go with two or three of her friends to make this offering, and described how self-conscious they felt as they slipped their offering into the hand of the receiver (a member of the bereaved family) or else left it shyly on a corner of the table as they rose to leave. But on no account would they dream of neglecting to *danfon offrwm*, though the receivers were sometimes considerably more wealthy than the givers.

A careful list is kept of all the offerings, and all gifts are punctiliously returned when a death occurs in the family of any of the donors. In one case of which Mrs. Hughes told me, the total *offrwm danfon* was £12 8s.

On the day of the funeral, another offering is made, this time specifically to defray the costs of the burial. This money, usually sixpence or a shilling, is paid in set form. The house is so arranged that if possible the neighbours come in through one door and out through another; on the way, a round table is set, covered by a white cloth with a handkerchief laid crossways over it. A deacon or elder of the chapel (usually the senior deacon or elder) stands by the table as the mourners pass by, placing their *offrwm* on the handkerchief.

Those neighbours who have not had an opportunity to *danfon offrwm* previously may place on the handkerchief, in addition to their sixpence

or shilling, an envelope containing their florin or half-crown, and bearing their name and address, so that it may be added to the list.

When all the mourners have passed by, the deacon or elder takes up the handkerchief and hands over the *offrwm* to the head of the family.

This insistence upon having an officer of the Nonconformist Chapel to preside over the table suggests that this custom may be a post-eighteenth-century development, and a usage which grew up in the remote and poverty-stricken quarrying hamlets and villages which sprang up around the first chapel to be built there in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

It would appear that in this age of the welfare state, some of the younger people seek to avoid *danfon offrwm*, and instead excuse themselves from making the pre-funeral visit by giving their offering to the bereaved at the graveside. But they still make the gift.

(Information from Mrs. Margaret Hughes, Ty Cefn, Rhiwlas, Bangor, Caernarvonshire.)

FRANK PRICE JONES.

New Books

Iolo Morganwg

The year 1956 may well become memorable in Wales for the publication of the first volume of Professor G. J. Williams's long-awaited biography in Welsh of Edward Williams (*Iolo Morganwg*).[1] Iolo Morganwg (1747–1826), a stone-mason by trade, lived the greater part of his life in the village of Flemingston in the Vale of Glamorgan. His versatility was amazing. In his own craft he was a master, as may be seen from the superb lettering of his 'Spencer monument' in St. Athan's Church; his chief claim to immortality, however, is as a poet. As an historian of literature he was in every respect unique. In addition, his knowledge of agriculture, horticulture, architecture, geology, botany, politics, the history of religion, theology, folk-lore, etc., was stupendous. His manuscripts, in the Llanover collection and a great mass recently presented by his distinguished descendant Mr. Iolo Aneurin Williams, are principally in the National Library of Wales. He is the subject of Elijah Waring's *Recollections and Anecdotes of Edward Williams* (1850) and is described in Southey's poem *Madoc* and in the work of Benjamin Heath Malkin. Iolo himself published an 'autobiography' as a preface to his *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral* (1794). The picture given in this book is very different from all these. Iolo had a strange psychological twist and was a forger of manuscripts unsurpassed in any country. He was, too, the first great Welsh romantic. 'Behind the forgeries', writes Professor Williams, 'can be seen a man of genius, one of the most gifted men in the whole history of the Welsh nation, a man whose versatility of interests reminds us of the old Humanists, a scholar who spent his life reading the old manuscripts and every book which concerned the history of Wales and its literature. After the death of Ieuan Fardd in 1788, he was the greatest of Welsh scholars, and in many respects he was greater than Ieuan. Above all else—and this is true of all the old scholars—he was a manuscripts man. He possessed a more detailed knowledge of the works of the *Cywyddwyr*[2] than any other person in the eighteenth century— a more detailed knowledge than that of any who followed him until our own day, a statement which may appear to be somewhat extreme . . .

[1] G. J. Williams: *Iolo Morganwg*. Y gyfrol gyntaf. Pp. xlix, 477. Price 30s. Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1956.
[2] Poets in the Welsh strict metres in the thirteenth to the mid-seventeenth centuries.

Undoubtedly he is the greatest authority on the literature of Glamorgan. It must always be borne in mind that no one could have perpetrated the forgeries except one who knew far more about the history of Welsh literature and the contents of the manuscripts than any of his contemporaries. But because of the twist in his mind which caused him to distort and pervert all his discoveries, it is difficult for us to-day to pass a balanced judgement on his attainments and his contribution as a Welsh scholar.' It is obvious from this first volume that Iolo muddied the stream of Welsh history (and of Glamorgan history in particular) to such an extent, and in so many unexpected directions, that large numbers of serious scholars of our own time have been led astray. It was he, of course, who 'invented' the Gorsedd of the Bards, now a colourful adjunct of the annual national Eisteddfod, but few realize that it was he, too, who caused the Eisteddfod, previously merely a bardic court, to become the cultural 'capital' of the Welsh tradition. For Glamorgan he performed the same service that Sir Walter Scott gave to Scotland. Iolo's Glamorgan is one of the great creations of the romantic period in Wales.

For the student of folk life, the first chapter of this volume is invaluable. In it are discussed the houses of the Vale, its crafts and industries, and the festivals, manners, and customs of its people. Iolo printed questionnaires which he circulated amongst the gentry and clergy to obtain information for his projected History of Glamorgan. Here is Question No. 29: 'Have you any Wake, Whitsun Ale, Doles, or other such Customs, in the Parish; any Annual or other Processions or Perambulations; any Mummers at Christmas, Festivities on May-day, Tilting, Running at the Ring, &c.?' In a list prepared in 1810 he includes:

1. Whitewashing of houses, barns, garden walls, etc.
2. Decorating graves with flowers at Easter, Whitsun, and planting flowers, etc., on graves.
3. Strewing flowers on roads in front of weddings and funerals of young unmarried men.
4. Sowing Cake, Epiphany Cake.
5. Christmas log, sitting and singing on it.
6. Lenten pancakes. 'Beheading' Lent.
7. Giving cake and ale to the ox in the feeding-walk before Christmas morning.
8. Bedecking the manure heap with flowers on St. John's Day, weeding it first.
9. Summer birch or pole [maypole].
10. St. John's Day cheese . . . St. Thomas's Day 'oating'.
11. St. John's Day bed.
12. Mari Lwyd—and wassailing—the eighteen-handled bowl;

and so on under forty-one headings. He also describes children's (and other) games. In this respect, Professor Williams refers to an eighteenth-century diary kept by a certain William Thomas; this gives descriptions of dancing, races, games and revels in a part of the Vale of Glamorgan. For instance, in June 1768 the men of St. Nicholas tried to seize the St. Fagans birch-pole, 'their painted wooden god' and were repelled 'with great Huzza's'.[1] Iolo Morganwg also collected (and composed) a large number of *penillion* sung by the ox-drivers.

This note has been written to draw attention to the importance of this work to students of houses, agriculture, folk-lore and, indeed, folk life in general. Its main theme (which will be completed in the eagerly-awaited second volume) goes far beyond the field of this Journal. But since this remarkable man contributed so extensively to folk-life studies (he even had ideas about the creation of a folk museum), it is proper that Professor Williams's work (which is one of the greatest feats of scholarship of our age) should be warmly welcomed on these pages.

IORWERTH C. PEATE.

The Singing of the Travels

The contents of this book[2] may be summarized as follows. It has four chapters dealing with the dances, songs and popular festivals of various districts of Spain; a chapter devoted to the 'bull cult' of Provence and Iberia and bear festivals in the Pyrenees and another entitled 'Basque Doings' which contains information on the *Charivari*, which might be described as outbreaks of ritualized mob-law against persons who have outraged the local code of behaviour or morals, and the *Pastorales* or open-air folk dramas descended from medieval mystery plays. A further chapter takes us to Switzerland to describe some examples of carnivals, from where we return to the Basque provinces and Spain for accounts of the pageantry of religious processions, to depart eastwards again to witness a Slovenian procession which includes a dance-drama and a frolic of maskers. The final chapter deals with some instances of the religious folk-theatre and dramatic dances in Provence. The whole is written in the form of a personal narrative of the author's travels in search for and study of folk dance, drama and festival and the curious title is borrowed from that of a song of the Symondsbury mummers in Dorset. It is illustrated by ten photographs and seventeen line drawings.

[1] The Editor of GWERIN hopes to have the pleasure of publishing a paper by Professor Williams on this diary in a forthcoming number.
[2] Violet Alford: *The Singing of the Travels.* Pp. 256, price 17s. 6d. London: Max Parrish, 1956.

For those unfamiliar with the subjects with which it deals the book will be a revelation both of the infinite regional variety of the superficial pattern of this aspect of European folk-life and of the essential unity underlying it all. The painstaking and widespread fieldwork on which it is based will immediately command respect for the single-minded devotion with which the author has pursued her studies while the incidental information given will afford the layman some indication of the results of the research which has been accomplished in this branch of knowledge. These general statements are intended to indicate the general impression of the book on the non-specialist. They must not lead to an evaluation of it for something other than it is: a miscellany of anecdote and description garnered in the course of extensive travels on a programme of unusual research. For those with an interest in the dance and folk festivals it will be a travel book of a new and stimulating kind while its *obiter dicta* will furnish them with a good deal of information on the ancestry and distribution of many of the types. For the serious student, on the other hand, these very virtues present limitations to its usefulness for he will find the discursive style a nuisance, the descriptive accounts at once too incomplete and too subjective and the interpretations, perhaps, too canonically indebted to the *Golden Bough*. For him, however, the short bibliography appended to each chapter, referring to authoritative sources for fuller information on many of the subjects mentioned in the text, may be consulted with great profit.

<div style="text-align: right">A. T. LUCAS.</div>

GWERIN

EDITORIAL NOTES

THE year 1957 marks the Jubilee of several Welsh institutions, and notably the two sister institutions, the National Library and the National Museum of Wales, which were incorporated by Royal Charter in March, 1907. These are, in a real sense, national (not provincial) institutions.

The National Museum of Wales had as its first Director the late Dr. William Evans Hoyle. Hoyle was an exceptional man: a proficient linguist, he acquired after his appointment an excellent knowledge of Welsh. He was a member of a small group who attempted unsuccessfully in the years before the First World War to initiate a British Folk Museum. In his first report to his Council he stressed the need for the collection of folk materials and for an adequate open-air space to exhibit them. The third Director, Sir Cyril Fox (who retired in 1948) saw the creation in 1936 of a Department of Folk Life which, in 1948, was merged into the newly-created Welsh Folk Museum, with its headquarters at St. Fagans (four-and-a-half miles west of Cardiff).

The Welsh Folk Museum (with a Curator, Deputy Curator, two Assistant Curators and a staff of over forty persons) now exhibits a sixteenth-century manor house with its gardens and grounds, a sixteenth-century barn, a rural woollen factory, two farmhouses and a Nonconformist chapel. Two other farmhouses and a Caernarvonshire cottage are about to be re-erected. Some rural crafts are practised. A modern block of buildings (exhibition galleries, storage rooms, library, research and class rooms, administrative offices, theatre and restaurant) is planned at a cost of about £300,000. A small part of this block (at a cost of about £15,000) has recently been erected through the generosity of some of the Welsh county councils; a gallery of folk-life exhibits was opened in it last April

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as the Folk Museum's contribution to the Jubilee celebrations of the National Museum. The Welsh Folk Collection, however, is still mainly in store awaiting the completion of the Exhibition Block, for which unfortunately there are no funds. Such funds are urgently needed: contributions should be addressed to the Curator of the Welsh Folk Museum, St. Fagans, Cardiff. They will be gratefully received and fully acknowledged. The completion of the Welsh Folk Museum buildings would be a fitting consummation of the work of the National Museum of Wales during its first fifty years.

*   *   *

I commend the following excerpt from De Laet's *Archaeology and its Problems* (London 1957) to the consideration of readers: 'The material records of man's past are the rightful heritage of the human race, and no one has the right to reserve them for himself. . . . Many museum curators . . . wish jealously to preserve for themselves the monopoly of any study and publication of the pieces entrusted to them.' It has never been my experience that students of folk life suffer from this sin, but apparently, from De Laet's experience (and from my own in other fields), it is still not unknown.

*   *   *

The contributors to this number are Professor G. J. Williams, professor of Welsh in the University College, Cardiff, and one of the outstanding Welsh scholars of this century; Mr. James Walton, whose work on cruck construction is well known to all students of houses; and Mr. Ronald Buchanan, of the Queen's University, Belfast, editor of *Ulster Folklife*.

Glamorgan Customs in the Eighteenth Century

G. J. WILLIAMS

THE Editor has suggested to me that I should give the readers of GWERIN a short account of certain features of rural life in the Vale of Glamorgan which are referred to in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century documents. Many of these are to be found in the Iolo Morganwg MSS. in the National Library of Wales. They contain lists of old customs and festivities, and of the games which were so popular throughout Glamorgan during his lifetime. Much valuable material can also be found in a curious diary which was written by an eccentric old schoolmaster, William Thomas, who lived in Michaelston-super-Ely, within a mile of the Welsh Folk Museum in St. Fagans. He was born in 1727 and died in 1795, and from 1750 until his death he kept a diary. It is a curious document, full of gossip and scandal. In spite of the great interest which he took in the activities of the Welsh Methodist Revivalists and of the Nonconformist Ministers, he was regarded by his contemporaries as a wizard and a magician, and, indeed, it was as a great master of the 'occult arts' that he was remembered in the neighbourhood of St. Fagans for over a hundred years after his death. He was, indeed, a complex character, who duly recorded the evil doings of his contemporaries in East Glamorgan for over forty years. This perverted Calvinist condemns all rural amusements, the revels, cock-fighting, horse-races, the 'assemblies of dance and song', etc., but at the same time he sometimes gives us fairly accurate descriptions of those amusements which retained their popularity in the Vale of Glamorgan until the second half of the nineteenth century. Unfortunately the original diary has disappeared, but in 1888 a Glamorgan historian, David Jones of Wallington, a native of Llanblethian, near Cowbridge, saw the second volume. It was a bulky tome of 1296 pages, and contained all the entries made between 1762 and 1795. He did not have time to make a complete transcript, but he has given us copious extracts, with commentaries (which are invaluable for the local historian).[1] It is certain that the scores of entries which he did not include in his copy contained valuable material. If the original diary were to be discovered, it

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[1] His copy is now in the Cardiff Free Library—Cardiff MS. 4.877.

would be an important event for students of folklore, of folk customs, and kindred subjects. Much interesting information can also be found in the writings of other natives of Glamorgan in the nineteenth century.

Undoubtedly, the most popular festival in Glamorgan, as in other parts of Wales, was the *gwylmabsant* (or *mabsant*), the 'wakes' or 'revels', once the patronal festival of a parish, when work was suspended, and the inhabitants of all the surrounding districts came together, 'a great concourse of disorderly people, bawling, drinking, singing, dancing, &c.'. It often lasted for a week, and everybody kept open house. Originally, it began on the Sunday following the festival of the Patron Saint, but by this time, it had lost its religious character, and people came together to dance and sing, and to witness different kinds of rustic games and contests, bandy play, football, bull-baiting, cock-fighting, etc. When Charles Wesley came to Glamorgan in 1741, he found that the 'revel-routs' gave him a great opportunity. He says in his *Journal*:

> Thur., August 27th. . . . I went to a revel at Lanvase, and dissuaded them from their *innocent* diversions, in St. Peter's words: 'For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries'. An old dancer of threescore fell down under the stroke of the hammer. She could never be convinced before that there was any harm in those innocent pleasures.
>
> Mon., September 14th. . . . I rode to a revel at Dennis-Powis. It was one of the greatest in the country; but is now dwindled down to nothing. . . . Tues., September 15th. I was at another famous revel in Whitchurch, which lasts a week, and is honoured with the presence of the gentry and Clergy, far and near. I put myself in their way, and called, 'Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light'. I trust there was a great awakening among the dead souls.[1]

But in Glamorgan, these revels were not really patronal festivals in the old sense of the word, and *gwylmabsant* (or *mabsant*) was used for any kind of an assembly of this kind. Even the 'May games' and the 'assemblies of dance and song', the *taplasau haf*, which were held every Saturday throughout the summer and on until All hallows' day, were called *mabsantau*. It is quite clear from various entries in William Thomas's diary that many of them had been organized by innkeepers, and that they were held at regular intervals in the villages of the Vale from Easter until All hallows' day, and sometimes in two villages in the same parish. William Thomas maintains that the revel held in St. Andrews Major was 'no more than 50 yrs making'. 'This week', he says on October 1, 1764, 'the rioting & revelling in St Faggans wch they begun by one Edwd John dec^d father of ye present Jenkin John about this 38 years past and a full week of noise and riots I do remember to be kept there. But this yr. no more than 2 days

and not such an appearance as usual on ym days. They baited a Bull by Jenkin John's house wch broke the ring and went away. But an . . . quiet Bull (owner Richard ye Butcher of Eley) was soon taken and Baited by ye River again without damage. Also Whitchurch Revel was but of small appearance Fair Water's riots as ours Michaelston super Eley is gone Down wch in time will be the fate of the rest.' It is clear that these gatherings were well organized throughout the county, and in spite of the efforts of the Welsh Revivalists (and the earnest wishes of William Thomas), they continued to attract hundreds of spectators. Iolo Morganwg refers to these organized festivals of mirth and sport, and to the various kinds of games that were played—*hen chwaraeon y Cymry* (the 'old games of the Welsh people'). He maintains that they were played every year on Mynydd y Pysgodlyn in Llangyfelach (near Swansea), that the meeting was held in the month of June, and that it lasted for three days. I have lately found amongst his papers two printed hand-bills concerning the sports (or 'gambols') which were held there in 1780, one in English and the other in Welsh. This gathering, like the revels in St. Fagans and St. Andrews, had been arranged by innkeepers, who ask for subscriptions towards the prizes. This is the programme for the three days:

FIRST DAY

Sport.	Prizes.	Value £	s.	d.
1. Womens Race — — —	Smock and petticoat — —	1	1	0
2. Race by men in sacks —	⎧ Gold laced hat, first prize —	1	5	0
	⎩ Silver laced hat, second best —	0	12	6
3. Poney race — — —	⎧ Mens saddle and bridle			
	⎩ (beside subscription purses) —	1	11	6
4. Cock-fighting — — —	A poney — — — —	3	3	0
5. Shooting at a mark — — —	A gun — — — —	2	2	0
6. Flinging the bar — — —	Twelve yards of ribbon — —	0	6	0
7. Mumbling a sparrow — —	A silver plated mug — —	0	10	6

SECOND DAY.

1. Young mens foot-race —	⎧ Pair of shoes, and silver			
	⎪ shoe buckles, first prize —	1	6	0
	⎨ Pair of stockings, and silver			
	⎩ knee buckles, second best —	0	10	6
2. Girls poney race — — —	Womens saddle and bridle			
	(beside subscription purse) —	1	11	6
3. Ass race — — — —	A pair of leather breeches —	1	1	0
4. Old womens grinning match —	A looking glass — — —	0	10	6
5. Wheelbarrow-driving, blind-folded	A coat and waistcoat — —	1	5	0
6. Bandy — — — —	For 12 winners, a bottle of brandy			
	each — — — —	2	2	0
7. Badger hunt by terriers — —	Silver collar for the best dog —	1	1	0

THIRD DAY.

1. Old mens foot race —	{ Nine pounds of tobacco, first prize	1 2 6
	Three ditto, second best —	0 7 6
2. Sack race after a cock —	— The cock, and a sack of flower	1 15 0
3. Ass race, face to the tail —	— A pair of boots — — —	1 1 0
4. Eating of hot hasty pudding	— Silver table spoon — —	0 10 6
5. Race after a grease'd-tail pig	— The pig — — — —	2 2 0
6. Foot-ball — — —	— For 12 winners, a bottle of gin each	1 4 0
7. Bull bait — — —	— A bull calf for the best dog —	1 1 0.

I have seen other references which show that these games or 'gambols' ('*llambidyddiaethau*' in the Welsh version) were a feature of rural life in Glamorgan in the eighteenth century.

Iolo Morganwg maintains that the old game 'badger in the bag' (which is described in the First Branch of the Mabinogi) was quite common in Glamorgan in his own day, and, indeed, it remained as a children's game in the village of Nantgarw (near Cardiff) until the early years of this century.[1] The same thing is true of another old game (sometimes mentioned in medieval poetry), 'nuts in the hand.' He also mentions *chware triphost, gwau'r garthen, bwbach darllain* (which may, possibly, be a mistake for *bwbach dallan* 'blind-man's-buff'), *sallti, dwrdyn dai, pigwrda, llawfrenin*, but no one, as far as I know, has been able to identify any of these. He also gives a minute description (with accompanying music) of a game which had flourished in Wales for centuries, *chwarae'r brigant* (probably the English word, *brigand*), a very complex kind of a martial dance.[2] William Thomas, our diarist, does not refer to any of these, nor to the most popular sport in Glamorgan, namely, bandy play, an early form of hockey. The Welsh term, *bando*, is probably borrowed from the English *bandy*, and the earliest example of the word in Welsh occurs in the great English-Welsh dictionary published by the Glamorgan lexicographer, John Walters, in 1770–94. Yet, it is quite obvious that it was a most popular game in Glamorgan throughout the eighteenth century, and the word must have been in use long before the appearance of the dictionary. It held the place occupied in the twentieth century by rugby football. The bards composed poems in praise of famous players—unfortunately, none of these 'Pindaric' odes has survived. According to the Llangyfelach hand-bill of 1780, members of the winning bandy team had 'a bottle of brandy each', while the footballers had to be content with 'a bottle of gin each', a cheaper (and much less satisfactory) commodity. Iolo Morganwg (who speaks here as an agriculturist) has an interesting note on this game in a review which he wrote in 1796:

[1] *The Bulletin of the Board of Celtic Studies*, XVI, 101.
[2] *The University College of Wales Magazine*, III, 159–62.

Bandy playing is a very popular diversion of young men that ought to be suppressed, and by severities if milder courses will not prevail. it is in some things similar to Cricket but the bat is made of a young ash or elm sappling, having one end bent . . . with this they strike the ball. when I was a boy from 8 to 12 or 14 years of age, I was esteemed dexterous at making these Bats or Bandys. I well supplied my pockets with money for every boyish purpose by making bandies for which I should have from 3d. to 6d. each. I have for this purpose destroyed from time to time some hundreds of fine elm and ash sapplings that I found of spontaneous growth in the hedges.[1]

But, undoubtedly, the most graphic picture of the way in which these games convulsed the countryside in the eighteenth century is to be found in a letter which a John Price sent to Rhys Thomas, the Cowbridge printer, in 1777. When travelling from Bridgend to Pyle he observed 'with great disgust the extraordinary barrenness of your country in ash and elm'. He mentioned this to a native who had overtaken him:

Alas! said he do you observe those vast crowds of people before you drawing towards the sea yes said I. I suppose [the]re is a wreck on the coast He informed me otherwise and said they were going to a great Bandy Match to be played this day on a particular sand near the seashore where many thousands of people men women and children will be assembled to see the sport that it is the 16th match played this spring my companion further informed me that the Inhabitants of a dozen or more parishes are in an uproar and mind little besides these matches tis computed there are in each of these parishes upwards of hundred Gamesters including young boys who are initiating that each gamester furnisheth himself with three Bandys if we add three more which are destroyed by unskillful bending and the great number broke by thumping thwacking and breaking each others [he]ads not a bandy returning from some of those Matches it will make six hundred in every parish annually.[2]

All this continued until (at least) the middle of the nineteenth century. Charles Redwood gives a vivid account of a bandy match in his entertaining book, *The Vale of Glamorgan* (1839), 173–9. 'But Bandy is the prime game here', he says, 'and in the opinion of our rustics leads to the highest of all distinctions. Prodigious are the jealousy and heartburning which a rivalry in it produces between two parishes; and then, to decide their pretensions, they repair to the sea-shore sands, where twenty or thirty players engage on each side, and multitudes of spectators and partisans, too, often mingle in the contest.' The lads of Llantwit Major regarded themselves as the champions, tossing their heads 'exceeding hoity-toitily among the neighbouring villages, and carried everything with a high hand'. No cup-final ever aroused such intense interest as was seen in the Vale when the two teams arrived on the sea-shore, with their crowds of supporters, wearing 'distinguishing favours on their left arms, and flourishing their bandies with their right'. And in 1850, even that great Welsh Methodist minister, Edward Matthews of Ewenni, a native of

[1] Llanover MS. C2, 169.
[2] A letter in the Iolo Aneurin Williams Collection in the National Library of Wales.

the Vale, could not refrain from giving a long and vivid account of a
bandy match, which he included in the biography of another well-known
Methodist preacher, Jenkin Thomas (*Siencyn Penhydd*).

Another festival which figures in William Thomas's diary is that of the
'summer birch' (*y fedwen haf*) which was erected in many of the Vale
villages on the feast of St. John in midsummer. He does not mention the
May-day festivities, although Iolo Morganwg speaks of 'May games' in
St. Athan and Llantwit Major and of the 'garland acre' in Aberthaw
where games were held on May-day, 'and where those who excelled in them
set up garlands decked with the favours of their sweet hearts on a may
pole. this spot of ground was the Castle green.' But the feast of St. John
was a much more important occasion. The 'summer birch' was erected
in the village and gaily decorated with flowers and ribbons. Troupes of
morris-dancers came from the other villages, and the blind poet, William
Robert of Llancarfan, has given us an interesting description (in the Welsh
dialect of the Vale) of a 'summer birch' in Wenvoe, and of the troupe of
morris-dancers, in their gaily coloured dresses, that enlivened his own
native village of Llancarfan. These dancers were to be found throughout
the Vale, and they had a wooden building, called *pebyll*,[1] where they kept
their dresses, and where they often met to dance and sing. [It is interesting
to note that the famous air, *Triban Morgannwg*, is a dance tune.] An old
lady who lived in Llanblethian in 1882 remembered all this, and she gave
David Jones (the historian who copied William Thomas's diary) a descrip-
tion of the *pebyll*:

> Outside the 'Picton' she said there was a *Pabill* for dancing in. It was a rudely-
> built structure, posts, with wattled sides and thatched. The young people of the
> village would meet twice or thrice a week for dancing. The paraphernalia of the
> *Morris Dancers* was kept in this 'Pabill'—*morris dancing* being then quite a recognized
> public amusement and frequent exhibitions of it were made about the country.
> The 'Pabill' at Llanblethian was accidentally burnt down. There was another like it
> at Penmark.[2]

The diary gives us the names of many of the harpers and fiddlers who
accompanied these bands of dancers, not only on the feast of St. John, but
also on the village greens, and in those 'assemblies of dance and song'
which were held regularly every Saturday throughout the summer and
early autumn.

But many other things happened after the lads and lasses had erected
the 'summer birch' on the village green. This is what William Thomas
wrote in his diary on June 28, 1768:

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[1] *Pebyll* means 'pavilion, tent', and comes from the Latin *papilio*. In the sixteenth century, it came to
be regarded as a plural noun, and a new singular, *pabell*, was formed. But in Glamorgan, in the eighteenth
century and later, *pebyll* (written *pabill* by David Jones) remained a singular form. Iolo Morganwg
says that he saw a *pebyll dawnsio* in Llantwit Fardre in 1812.
[2] Cardiff MS. 4.877, 66a.

That frolicksome theft the May pole[1] of Landaff was set up in St Faggans very costive with much vain pomp and rejoycing and watching it with guns being threatend by St Nicholas folks and the next day about 5 o'clock at evg. about 50 of St Nicholas folks and their neighbours entered St Faggans with Clubs but before they had near reached their painted wooden god St Faggans and Llandaff's folks with guns and Clubs stroke at them and made them soon to retreat and abused some of them very pitifull and run'd after them to Cae Cwrva mawr behind Michaelston's Church with great Huzza's and kept that night in Continual guard with shooting of guns here and there all night also the 30th inst reports were spread ye Penmark Lancarvan & St Nicholas folks were to come to steal their wooden god that St Faggans folks see spies abroad every where and recruited their men from Landaff Cardiff &c to 100 or more where they watching yt night likewise with Continual shootings &c. but none came near them but the following days Warrants came to serve some of them for their abusing frolicks.

'Stealing the summer birch' was a popular pastime throughout the Vale. When the outsiders succeeded, it caused great dismay, for another birch could not be hoisted unless it had been stolen from one of the neighbouring parishes. I have seen another account of this 'abusing frolick' in an article which appeared in *The Cambrian Journal* in March, 1855 (pp. 68–9). It was written in 1842 by Morgan Rhys of Ystradowen, and it deals with the 'unpublished traditions' of that part of the Vale which lies between Cowbridge and Llantrisant. He was, in all probability, relying on what he had heard in his youth, and his account is not in full agreement with what we find in William Thomas's diary and in William Robert's poem. He says that all this was part of the 'old mode of celebrating the wakes' [or the *mabsant*],[2] and that the birch was lifted 'upon the cross in the church-yard' on Easter Monday. He writes:

We shall now describe the old mode of celebrating the wakes in this neighbourhood. The first thing they did was to hoist a birch bough on Easter Monday (the birch was selected because it was the straightest of all the trees). On the morning of the above day the ladies met in the church-yard for the purpose of decking the bough with ribbons, and the most honourable lady in the parish placed on it the handsomest rosette, whilst all the other girls contributed ribbons according to their means. When the women had finished their task of decking the birch bough, they were assisted by the men in lifting it upon the cross in the church-yard, in the presence of all the other parishioners, whilst the harpers were playing appropriate airs. Great was the joy of the whole parish on the occasion. Having thus placed it, beautifully decked, on the cross, they set watchmen to guard it for four days and four nights, lest it should be stolen. For it was considered a great disgrace for ages to the parish

[1] Although William Thomas uses the word 'May pole', it is clear that he is referring to the 'summer birch'. First of all, this attempted theft took place immediately after the feast of St. John. William Robert, the blind poet, says in his poem on the 'summer birch' of Wenvoe that it was raised on that festival (*'nos wyl-Jefan'*), and that sturdy young men kept guard over it lest it should be stolen (*'Os bydd rhai'n ceisio byth ei speilo'*). This poem has been printed in full in *Llên Cymru*, III, 48–50.
[2] In the nineteenth century the word *mabsant* was used in Glamorgan to denote any kind of a festive gathering. I met an old man in Ewenni in 1938 who told me that he used to go to the *mabsant* in his young days, but it was quite obvious that he was referring to a kind of *noson lawen* ('merry night') when the young people of the district met to sing and dance.

that lost its birch, whilst on the other hand, the parish that succeeded in stealing a decked bough, and preserving its own, was held up in great esteem. Old people say that the parish of Llanddunwyd [Welsh St. Donats] enjoyed this honour. According to usage, no parish that had once lost its birch could ever after hoist another, until it had succeeded in stealing one that belonged to some of the neighbouring parishes. Easter week was spent amidst the greatest joy and amusements. At daybreak on Easter Saturday the mistresses and their maids arose in order to finish their work by two o'clock in the afternoon, the time fixed for meeting in the pavilion or church-yard, to commence dancing, which was continued until sunset, when all departed for their respective homes. Musicians were hired for this dance, that is, a harper and a fiddler; and great was the desire of both old and young to witness the periodical return of this festive season.

I do not know how to reconcile these highly decorous festivities in Ystradowen and Welsh St. Donats with the wild goings-on in St. Fagans in 1768.

Another 'pastime' which has found a place in William Thomas's diary is the 'skymmetry court' (or 'skimmington court'), well known in England and Scotland, which survived in Glamorgan until the middle of the last century. On March 15, 1765, William Thomas writes:

Was acted with Much noise and riots in Wrenston & Wenvoe, *Skymmetry* on ye occasion that Morgan Daniel his wife abused him after a merry night of dancing at their house in Wrenston ye 13 Feb^{ry} last past Here John Bevan acted John y Kel and Jenkin ye Butcher of Eley Mawd Marriwn John y Sais one of the Judges, Thomas David of Burden's Hill, Blacksmith, Sheriff &c.

Unfortunately, David Jones does not give the entry in full, but Charles Redwood has included a graphic account of the 'skymmetry court' and of the procession which followed in *The Vale of Glamorgan*, 271–95. He calls it by the name *coolstrin*. This is the name given to it in Welsh (*cwlstrin* or *cwltrin*), but according to *A Dictionary of the Welsh Language* (University of Wales Press, 1956), 639, it does not occur in any book or manuscript prior to 1839. It still exists in some South Wales dialects. As an ardent Welshman, Redwood maintains that the Saxons borrowed this ancient custom 'of our forefathers, and long and often had recourse to it under the names of the Skimmington and the Riding. Some will tell you that it was profoundly instituted by the Old Welsh Lawgivers as a corrective for that virulence in women which is so much exacerbated by the air of our mountains, that although the custom has now fallen into disuse elsewhere, it is still found necessary to continue it in Wales. Even in our little village, in the peaceful vale, a recurrence to it was lately called for.' He describes how an innocent little tailor had been tormented by 'a very termagant wife', who 'would go so far as to cuff the little man, to the great disgrace of manhood in general'. The men of the village kept close watch, and at length 'a case occurred which they declared should be inquired into before the Coolstrin Court'. Blood had been drawn, and

this, according to the old custom, brought the case under the jurisdiction of that court. A preliminary meeting was held 'at the church porch', where they proceeded to appoint a judge, two advocates, officers 'with long white wands', and a crier. [There is no reference here to 'John y Kel and Maid Marian' (Mawd Marriwn), who, apparently, took an active part in the proceedings in Wrinston in 1765.] It was settled that the court should hold its first session on the following evening in the churchyard. The judge sat on the churchyard wall surrounded by a large assembly of rustics. Silence was proclaimed, and 'a statement was propounded to the Court' to the effect that Rissin (=Rhysyn), the tailor, had been mal-treated by his wife, Nest, a notorious and strapping vixen. The case was stated in detail, ending with the assertion that Rhysyn's nose had been broken, and that 'blood had trickled down his lip and chin'. It was decided that a *prima facie* case had been made out, and the old judge, Gronow Punter, directed that the tailor and his wife should be summoned to appear at their next session. The court was adjourned 'to that time se'nnight'. But Nest did not attend 'and make her defence, as some women had been known to do on similar occasions'. Redwood gives an amusing description of the way in which the proceedings were conducted. Witnesses had to behave with the utmost decorum. If anyone leant against the churchyard wall, the judge 'thundered at him, to stand up, or he should be committed to the church porch'. Then the advocates had to advance arguments on one side and the other, and the old judge had to settle difficult points of law to the applauding grunts of the 'public gallery'. Several meetings were held, and at last the important evening arrived when old Gronow Punter had to deliver judgement. This he did (after pushing his quid of tobacco into his waistcoat pocket) in a most learned and eloquent speech which brought great huzzas from the crowd of spectators. This is a most important institution, he said; 'I will hold there never were such wise people as the Welshmen of old times, who gave us this custom of the Coolstrin to guard our liberties from the Women'. They are a greater danger than the *Saeson* 'or *Franks*, or any other outlandish folks'. The English 'vapour about something of the same sort', but 'they comprehend little about the matter'. Then, after a long disquisition on Women in general, and on the evidence which had been submitted, he gives his verdict—'we must hold a riding upon Nest and Rissin'. After this, they laid their heads together to arrange 'for the important day of their procession'.

On that day there was great commotion in the village. 'The front was taken by old Gronow Punter, who still wore the large triangular horse's bone upon his head', and also his official 'robe about his shoulders'. Then

followed officers with long white wands, and two rustics carrying pitch-forks. Next came the band, making music with various domestic utensils—'a chorus of kitchen-music'. After these came the two standard-bearers. One carried a petticoat on the top of a pole, and the other a pair of breeches in the same manner, 'only reversed, with the upside down'. Then followed the two who impersonated Rhysyn and Nest, and a great crowd brought up the rear. The procession wended its way through the Vale amidst scenes of great merriment, and after a long circuit, they returned to their own village. There they stopped before the tailor's cottage. They fixed the pole 'on which the petticoat flourished' in front of the house and pelted it with mud and addled eggs. But the pole with the breeches 'was elevated on the roof' 'as the standard of masculine government'. As they left, they saw the face of the little tailor chuckling in the window.

Undoubtedly, this is a highly coloured description, but David Jones, who had heard old people talking about the 'coolstrin', and whose mother had actually seen a procession in Llantwit Major, refers to it as 'a complete account', which, apparently, agreed with the descriptions which he himself had heard in his youth in Llanblethian. The custom varied in different localities, and it is a great pity that David Jones did not give us a complete transcript of what William Thomas had to say about the 'skymmetry' that 'was acted' in 'Wrenston & Wenvoe' in 1765. In all probability the original diary contained many entries of this kind.

Other old customs and rural festivals are referred to in the lists which occur in the Iolo Morganwg MSS. These deserve careful study. It appears to me, although I am only a layman in this field, that they contain material which would interest all folklorists and students of folk culture.

Cruck-Framed Buildings in Scotland

James Walton

THROUGHOUT the greater part of Scotland, roof frameworks of cruck form are widespread, and this type of construction appears to be traditional from Caithness down to Dumfries. Examples have been recorded from the Orkneys, Caithness, Ross-shire, Inverness-shire, Skye, Argyllshire, Aberdeenshire, Perthshire, Renfrewshire and Dumfries-shire, and it seems highly probable that a detailed survey will reveal a still wider distribution.

Three distinct structural types are represented, and they occur in fairly well-defined geographical regions:

1. The *Ad* Truss.

This consists of two curved or straight principals, a couple, springing from a point between ground level and the top of the wall or rising from the floor itself. The tops are joined by a collar-beam, or yoke, the *ad*, on which the ridge-tree rests (Fig. 1a). This truss allows for a thick ridge of turf whilst still retaining a rounded crest, and it is widely distributed south of Loch Linnhe–Moray Firth.

2. The *Crup* Truss.

This is a scarfed, or jointed, couple, the two members of which cross at the apex to carry the ridge-tree. The principal rafters of the couple are joined by a collar-beam fixed a little higher than half-way up the roofs and the feet of the rafters are scarfed to upright wall-posts, *crup*, which extend downwards almost to ground level (Fig. 1b and c). This truss is characteristic of the houses of Skye and the adjoining mainland.

3. The Halved Truss.

This consists of two curved rafters, often made up of short lengths of driftwood, resting on foundation stones in wall recesses a foot or two above ground level (Fig. 1e). At the ridge the rafters are halved and pegged together, but they do not cross nor do they support a ridge-tree. This construction is found mainly in Caithness and the Orkneys and would appear to be connected with the Scandinavian *bael'lje*, as described by Halvor Vreim in the Finnmark *gamme*,[1] rather than with the cruck constructions farther south.

[1] Vreim, Halvor: 'The Ancient Settlements in Finnmark', *Folkliv*, Vol. 1, 1937, 169–204.

Dr. Colin Sinclair has classified the houses of the highlands and islands of Scotland into three groups[1]:

1. The Hebridean Type. The Hebridean *tigh dubh*, or 'black house', is typified by thick walls, varying from four to eight feet in thickness, with a core of rubble or earth. The rafters rest on the inner wall and the base of the thatch extends only to the wall core, thus leaving a wide ledge of exposed wall top, *tobhta*, which is covered with grass and serves as a sitting place in fine weather, or even as grazing for sheep. The roof is hipped, but as the roof truss is not of cruck type, the *tigh dubh* does not come within the scope of this paper, and it has already been fully described.[2] It shows several points of resemblance to the Viking houses at Jarlshof, in the Shetlands, which also have earth-cored walls, walled-off sleeping places, and central hearths.[3]

2. The Skye Type. The Skye house is a hipped roof long house, the thatch of which projects slightly beyond the wall tops. It is directly associated with the *crup* truss.

3. The Dailriadic Type. Under this heading Dr. Sinclair includes the gable-ended houses with overhanging eaves, which are found on the mainland of Argyll, in West Perthshire and in the isles of Islay, Jura, Colonsay, Arran and Mull. He notes, however, that 'houses of this class find a counterpart in the cottage architecture of Ireland and the Isle of Man, and in certain respects resemble the old cottages of the lowlands of Scotland'. The *ad* roof truss has a similar distribution, and it seems very probable that the *ad* truss is the traditional associate of the gable-ended dwelling in Scotland. In view of the wide distribution of the gable-ended type, the term 'Dailriadic', which applies only to this type in the Highlands, is not sufficiently comprehensive, a fact which Dr. Sinclair apparently realized himself when he suggested the term.[4]

Dr. Sinclair's classification recognizes the three main types of Scottish folk building, although it does not take into account the localized Orkney–Caithness variant in which the thatch rests on a flat coping stone and which has a halved cruck-shaped roof framework (Fig. 1e).[5]

[1] Sinclair, Colin: *The Thatched Houses of the Old Highlands*, 1953, pp. 16–17.
[2] Curwen, E. Cecil: 'The Hebrides: A Cultural Backwater', *Antiquity*, Vol. XII, 1938, pp. 261–89.
Kissling, Werner: 'House Traditions in the Outer Hebrides. The Black House and the Beehive Hut', *Man*, Vol. XLIV, 1944, 114.
Kissling, Werner: 'The Character and Purpose of the Hebridean Black House', *J.R.A.I.*, Vol. LXXIII, 1943, pp. 75–100.
Thomas, F. L. W.: 'Notice of Beehive Houses in Harris and Lewis', *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, Vol. III, Pt. I, 1857–8, pp. 127 *et seq.*, Pt. II, 1858–9, pp. 206 *et seq.*
Thomas, F. L. W.: 'On the Primitive Dwellings and Hypogea of the Outer Hebrides', *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, Vol. VII, 1870, pp. 153–60.
[3] Curle, Alex. O.: 'An account of the excavations of a dwelling of the Viking period at Jarlshof, Sumburgh, Shetland', *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.*, Vol. LXIX, 1934–5, pp. 286–7.
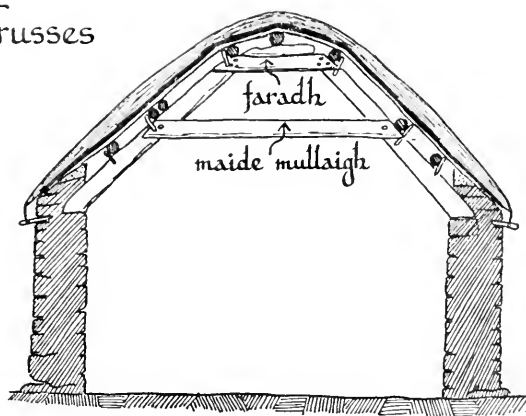[4] Sinclair, Colin: *op. cit.*, pp. 40–3.
[5] Fox, Cyril: The 'Round-Chimneyed Farm-houses of Northern Pembrokeshire', in *Aspects of Archaeology in Britain and Beyond*, 1951, pp. 131–3.
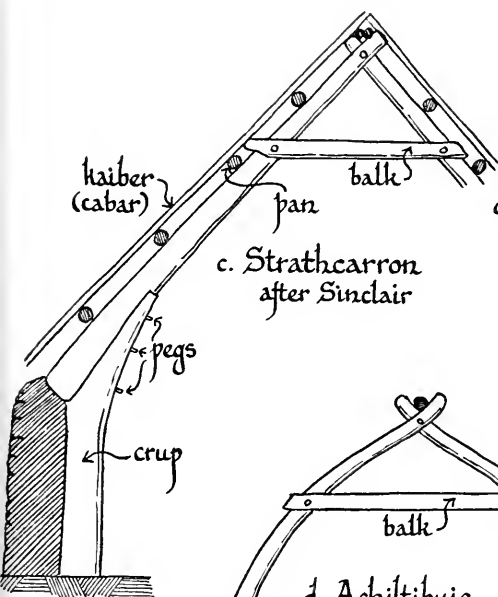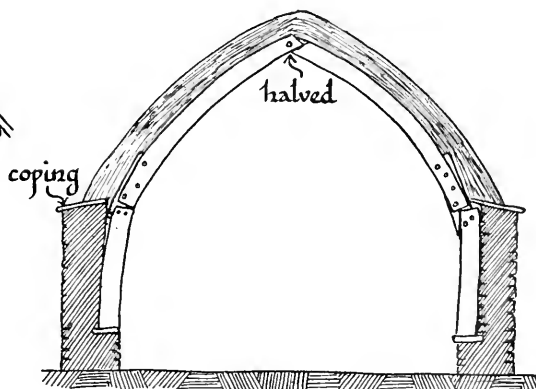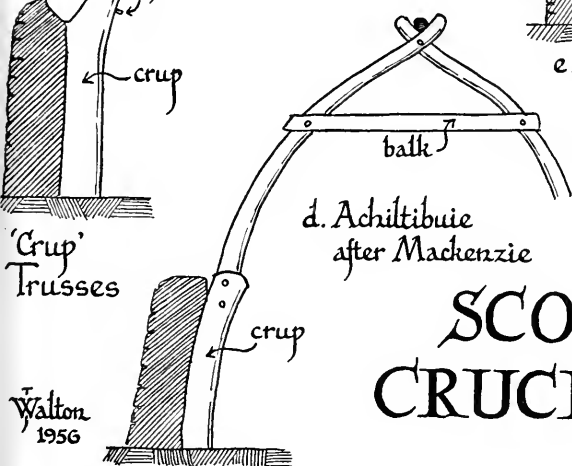
'Ad' Trusses

straw
turf
balk   ad
balk
kaiber
(cabar)
pan

a. Dull, Aberfeldy

faradh
maide mullaigh
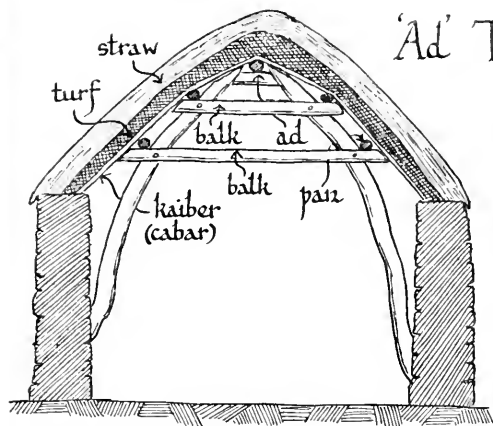
b. Errigal, Donegal (for comparison)
after Evans

kaiber
(cabar)
pan   balk
pegs
crup

c. Strathcarron
after Sinclair

halved
coping

e. Spital, Caithness   after Fox
Halved Truss

balk

d. Achiltibuie
after Mackenzie

'Crup'
Trusses

Walton
1956

crup

SCOTTISH
CRUCK TYPES

FIG. I

Traditional Scottish houses fall mainly into two broad groups, the hip-roofed and the gabled, and it seems preferable to retain this twofold division as the basis of classification, with regional sub-divisions as follows:

A. Hip-Roofed Houses.
1. The Hebridean *Tigh Dubh*.
2. The Skye type with *crup* trusses.

B. Gabled Houses.
1. Houses with normal tie-beam roof trusses.
2. Houses with *ad* roof trusses.
3. The Orkney–Caithness type with halved cruck-shaped trusses.

The *ad* roof truss is still well represented in the area around the eastern end of Loch Tay, particularly in the villages of Camserney and Dull. One Camserney building* (Plates 1 and 2) is of particular interest, as it has been left with its original interior fittings unchanged when a new house was built in its stead. It is somewhat unusual in plan, for it is actually two dwellings joined together under one roof and divided by a stone wall with a connecting doorway. Six couples divide the building into seven bays. The eastern house occupies three bays and the entrance, which has double doors typical of this area, leads into a tiny entrance lobby from which a doorway on the left leads into the kitchen and another doorway on the right affords access to the 'room'. Immediately in front of the entrance is a flight of wooden steps up to the loft over the 'room', and behind the stairs is a tiny closet, *cùil*, entered from the kitchen, from which it is separated by a wooden partition, the *cláraidh* (Fig. 2).

The kitchen is the room of greatest interest, mainly on account of its open hearth which is built against the central dividing wall. The fire itself rested on stone slabs directly on the floor and had two low stones, one at each side, which served to keep the fire in bounds and also as pot rests. Above the hearth is still preserved a fine example of the one time universal hanging-chimney, *similear-crochaidh*, which is made of wattle smeared with a mixture of clay and cow-dung, and carried the smoke through an opening in the roof. Half-way up the chimney is a bar from which the pot chain hangs, and beside the hearth a salt-box is built into the wall.

The dresser, which is the most ornate piece of furniture in the traditional Scottish house, stands against the *cláraidh* and is the finest example I have yet seen (Fig. 2). It is made of white wood and has a high plate rack behind. The cupboard has a central division for butter, and the door to it has an open grille of wooden rods, thus allowing air to enter the cupboard and keep the butter fresh.

* A detailed survey of this building is being made by Mr. J. Dunbar, of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments, and Mr. Hay, and will be published in the near future. Efforts are also being made to preserve the building for a future Highland Folk Museum.

PLATE 1. CAMSERNEY, ABERFELDY

PLATE 2. ENTRANCE AND TURF COPING, CAMSERNEY,

PLATE 3. HOGG'S COTTAGE, DULL, ABERFELDY

PLATE 4. WEAVER'S COTTAGE, KILBARCHAN

CAMSERNEY
Aberfeldy

pan
chuiber
turf blocks
cad
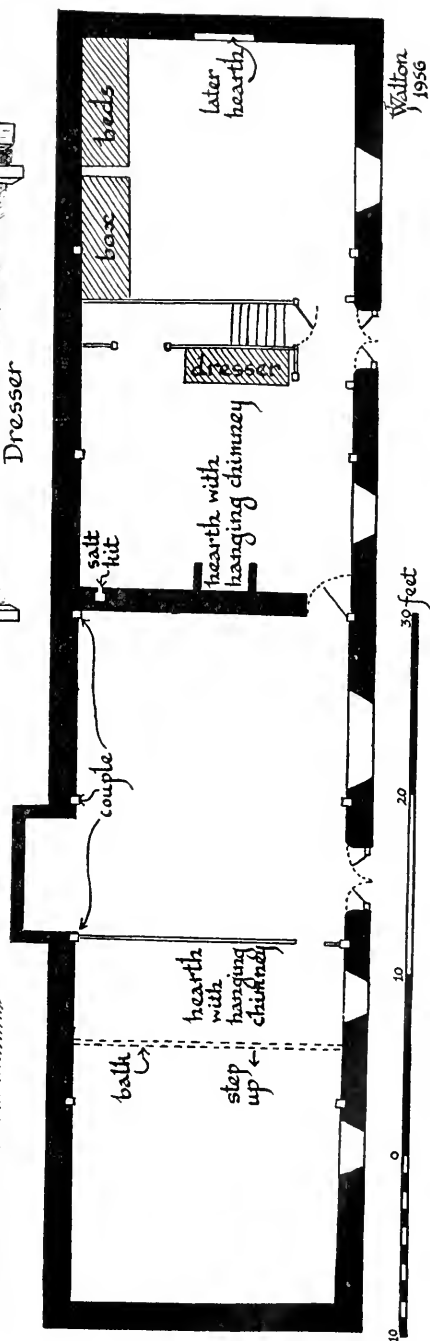upper balk
lower balk
Cruck Truss

Dresser

box
beds

later
hearth

dresser

salt
kit

hearth with
hanging chimney

couple

balk

hearth
with
hanging chimney

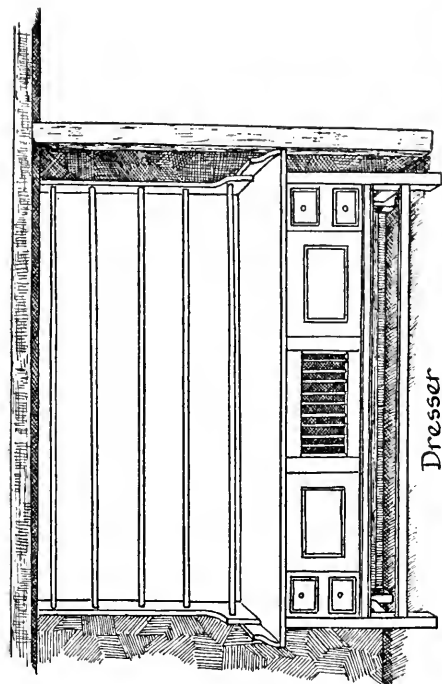step
up

Walton
1956

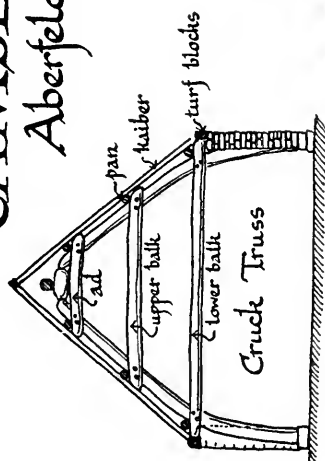0   10   20   30 feet

FIG. 2

The second room in this house has a fireplace built into the gable wall, representing a later tradition. The earliest type of hearth, as in the Hebrides, was a paved or cobbled space on the floor. Smoke escaped through an opening in the roof which was not placed directly over the fire lest it should be extinguished by the rain. Eventually a hanging-chimney was provided to conduct the smoke through the opening around which the thatch was bound. As the final development the fireplace was moved to the gable wall and the spread of the gabled building into areas of the hipped roof was largely due to the provision which it affords for a fireplace.

In this room two box beds are placed against the side wall. There seems to be little uniformity in the placing of the box beds, although formerly they were usually employed as a means of separating the byre from the living quarters when cattle and people lived under the same roof. The only entrance led into the byre which was divided from the living quarters by means of two box beds placed across the building so as to leave an entrance to the kitchen between them. Throughout western Britain the use of box beds or of the dresser to divide the house into two parts was general. It has been noted from many parts of Wales, although there, as in Ireland, the dresser was the article of furniture most commonly used for this purpose.[1]

Over the hearth in the kitchen of the second house is a wattle-and-daub canopy which is supported on a chimney-brest, or brace, stretching from wall to wall. The hearth beneath the canopy is a little over six feet wide, and it is marked off from the rest of the room by a shallow step. The second room, which is partly covered by a loft, has an outshut projecting from the rear wall. This measures a little over six feet by three feet internally and may have served as a bed-neuk. Bed recesses were formerly a common feature in the Hebrides, and they still survive in north-western Ireland, but both the Irish *cailleach* and the Hebridean bed-neuk are normally found in close proximity to the hearth.[2] In the Orkneys, however, the bed-neuks are outshuts along a side wall so that at Camserney may have served such a purpose.[3]

The outbuildings at Camserney also have *ad* roof trusses, and so have two cottages adjoining the tiny green at Dull on which the ancient stone cross stands (Plate 3). The two cottages are very similar both in plan and construction. The doorway, which is closed by double doors, enters into a small lobby with a wooden partition in front and doorways leading to the kitchen on the right and to the 'room' on the left. The 'room' is
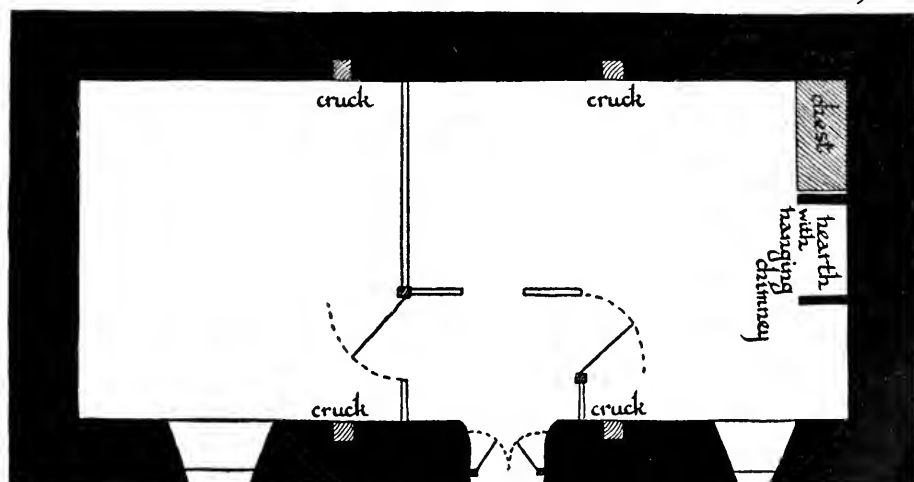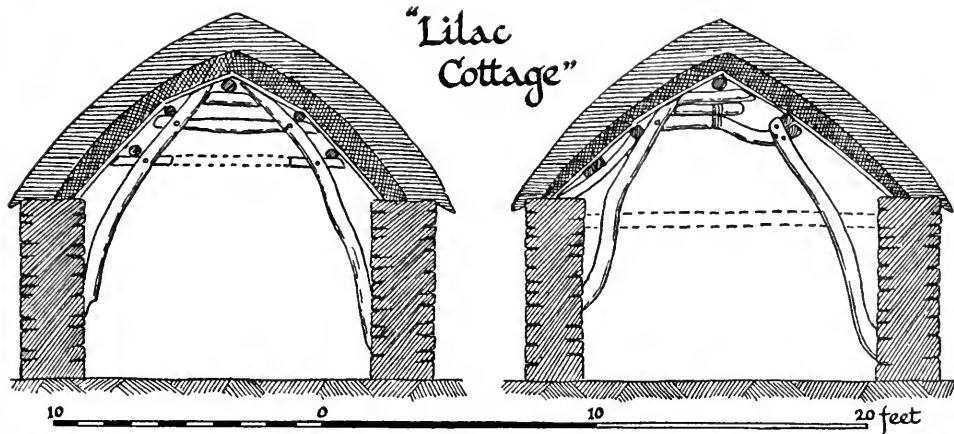
[1] Peate, Iorwerth C.: *The Welsh House*, 1944, p. 90.
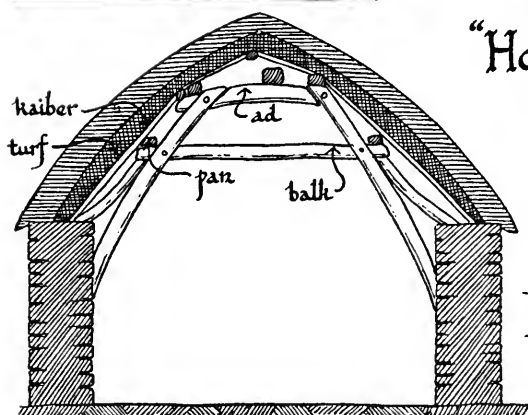   Evans, E. Estyn: *Irish Heritage*, 1943, p. 72.
[2] Campbell, Åke: 'Notes on the Irish House', *Folkliv*, Vol. 1, 1937, pp. 233–4.
[3] Fox, Cyril: *op. cit.*, pp. 135–7.

"Lilac Cottage"

cruck   cruck

chest

hearth with hanging chimney

cruck   cruck

"Hogg's Cottage"

kaiber

turf

ad

pan   balk

COTTAGES
DULL, Aberfeldy.

Walton 1956

Fig. 3

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separated from the kitchen by a wooden partition and these two partitions form an alcove at the end of the kitchen opposite the hearth (Fig. 3). Quite commonly this alcove was completely enclosed to form a tiny room, known as the *cùil* on the mainland and as the *closaid* on Skye. Probably at Dull the fourth boundary of this central room was the dresser or a box bed, but no indications of the lay-out of the furniture remain. The hearth, with its hood of wattle-and-daub carried on two projecting brackets, is placed against the gable wall, and in the space beside it is a wooden chest.[1]

My attention was drawn to two buildings with *ad* roof trusses in the vicinity of Kingussie, Inverness-shire, by Mr. George Davidson, the curator of the Highland Folk Museum. These are the ruined smithy at Torcroy and a barn at Killyhuntly farm. Farther east evidence for the same type of construction is afforded by Robert Dinnie's account of buildings in the parish of Kincardine O'Neil as they were in 1765. Robert Dinnie was a working mason who, with his sons, actually built such houses, and his description is therefore all the more valuable. As his book is not readily available I quote the passage in full.

> Farmers' and cottagers' houses were built of natural-faced stones of any quality that could be obtained nearest the site. The walls were generally about three feet thick at the bottom, and were brought in gradually towards the top; the width of the house seldom exceeded twelve feet within walls, but the length often varied from thirty-five to sixty feet, especially the farmhouse, and was frequently divided with a stone-wall which went under the name of a stone couple, being a support to the roof. Through this partition was a door opposite the lobby for the purpose of passing from the one end of the house to the other. The couples were made with a perpendicular leg on each side of about four and a half feet in length, and were set up when the walls were built to the height of eighteen inches, with the foot of the couple resting on the inner part of the wall. The couples were placed from six to ten feet apart, and the gable tops serving the place of two, only three or four were required for a house of forty feet in length. The couples were sometimes made of whole trees, squared a little with the adze or axe, sometimes with trees cleft down the middle called half tree. In place of nails they used wooden pegs for fixing together the different parts of the couple. The rafters did not unite at the top, a space being left for the roof-tree, which lay on the crown of the couples. The lower baulks were placed about two-thirds down the couple, and the upper ones near the top, close below the roof-tree. To complete the roof for the thatch, two or three pieces of wood were laid horizontally along the house, resting on the couples and gable tops at equal distances apart. They were again intersected with smaller pieces of timber laid near each other, the one end resting on the side walls and the other extending to the top of the roof. The divots were then put on, somewhat in the manner of slating, and afterwards the thatch, which consisted of straw, heather, broom, or rushes. The angles of the ridge and skews were neatly rounded with the thatch, and secured with ropes made of straw or heather. The gable tops were generally of turf, tastefully built after the herring-bone pattern, also a foot or eighteen inches on the side walls, which was necessary for driving pegs to hold the fastenings for securing the eaves from the wind. The

[1] I am indebted to Mr. David Fogo for showing me the Dull and Camserney buildings.

doors were seldom above five feet six inches in height, and the windows about two feet or two feet six inches by one foot six inches in width, which was considered a fair size, but many were smaller.

In the interior of the house the divisions were composed of the furniture, box-beds, and presses, and doors which divided the several apartments. The floors were composed of clay, and some were laid with natural-faced stones; very few of the farmers' houses at this time had joisting or ceiling, but open to the top of the roof. The fireplaces had no chimneys or vents built into the walls to direct the smoke, but what was called a back-stone, from four to five feet in length, about one foot in thickness, and about three feet in height, was built to the centre of the gable wall, and the fire placed before it, the smoke went up the side of the gable wall, and out at a large wooden 'lum' about three feet wide at the bottom and about two at the top, and if the wind was unfavourable the smoke went along the roof within and out at the opening at the other end of the house. These large chimney-tops, open to the interior of the house in an upright direction, acted strongly as ventilators, which was of course favourable to the health and longevity of the inmates. Clay was the only cement used in the building of the walls, and also for plaster on the inner side. Although without lathing, still the walls were free from damp within, the stones in the wall being laid in a sloping direction, and so carrying the water towards the exterior of the house. Some were built without mortar of any kind, others had the stones bedded and closed in joints with moss, which made a very dry and comfortable dwelling.

Six or seven days of a carpenter were sufficient to do all the wood-work of an ordinary farm-house. Nothing more was required to complete the building than the empty shell, as an incoming tenant brought his whole furniture from his previous lodging, and left nothing within its walls. But it may be borne in mind that tenants did not remove so often as they do in general now-a-days; although some lived to a long age it was nothing uncommon at the time for them to come into the world and leave the world under the same roof. Some of these old houses have been known to stand upwards of one hundred and fifty years without any further expense than that of keeping the thatch in repair. The cost of a house of this description at the present time (1885) would not exceed £20, and about one hundred years ago £5, while several farmers' houses in this locality have recently cost about £300 sterling. Still those houses constructed on the old plan were more comfortable and healthy for the inhabitants than the buildings of the present day.[1]

In the lowlands of Scotland the same construction was also employed and a number of examples have survived. The Weaver's Cottage at the Barngreen, Kilbarchan, Renfrewshire (Plate 4), has two couples of cruck type, each joined across the top by an *ad*. This building, which, according to the inscription on the door lintel, was erected by Andrew, John and Jenet Brydein in 1723, is now under the care of the National Trust for Scotland, and it is hoped to re-furnish it as a weaver's cottage and preserve it as a small folk museum. The internal arrangements indicate that the cruck trusses belong to a still earlier building and that probably only the walls were built by the Brydeins in 1723. Originally it had a thatched roof but this was later replaced by the present slate roof.[2]

[1] Dinnie, Robert: *History of Kincardine O'Neil*, 1885, pp. 84–8.
[2] Buchanan, Alastair: 'A Kilbarchan Weaver's Cottage', *Scottish Field*, Vol. CII, 1954, p. 25.

Another interesting example was the Paton Cottage at Torthorwald, Dumfries-shire, which was demolished in 1948. Fortunately a photograph of the framework was taken by Sir Walter Aitchison, and on this and the account left by Dr. John Gibson Paton, who lived in the cottage from 1830, George Bartholomew was able to publish a brief account of the building.[1] Dr. Paton suggests in his *Autobiography*, published in 1889, that the cottage was 300 years old when he first went there, but he does not give any evidence to support this.

The over-all dimensions of the cottage were approximately 42 feet by 17 feet, and it was divided into a kitchen and 'room' with the usual *cúil* in the middle, opposite the door, and a large gable fireplace in each room. The walls were of rubble, pointed with sand, clay and lime and, according to Dr. Paton, they were re-built from time to time.

The couples were similar to those already described (Fig. 4), although the *ad* was much wider than those found farther north. Purlins, known in Scotland as *pans*, were carried on the projecting ends of the collar beams and the ridge-tree rested on the *ad*. Thin rafters, *cabair* or *kaibers*, were arranged close together and stretched from the wall top to the ridge-tree. Such a roof framework was referred to as *pan and kaiber*. On these *kaibers* was placed the turf, which was of double thickness at the ridge, and this was finally covered with a straw thatch. Another similar cottage still stands nearby, and a further example has been recorded from a barn at Canonbie.[2]

A house was referred to as a 'two-coupled' or a 'three-coupled' house and the distance between the couples was regarded as an approximate unit of measurement, as it was in Ireland, Denmark and Skåne,[3] and as was the 'bay' in England.[4] The following examples indicate its uniformity throughout Scotland:

Kincardine (see Robert Dinnie)	6–10 feet
Paton Cottage, Torthorwald	7 ft. 6 ins.
Lilac Cottage, Dull	9 feet
Hogg's Cottage, Dull	9 feet
Camserney	9 feet

The width of the couples was also fairly constant, and any increase in the size of a house was made by the addition of extra couples. The width adopted was probably that found by trial and error to be the safest and most efficient, and Estyn Evans has recorded that in Donegal it was
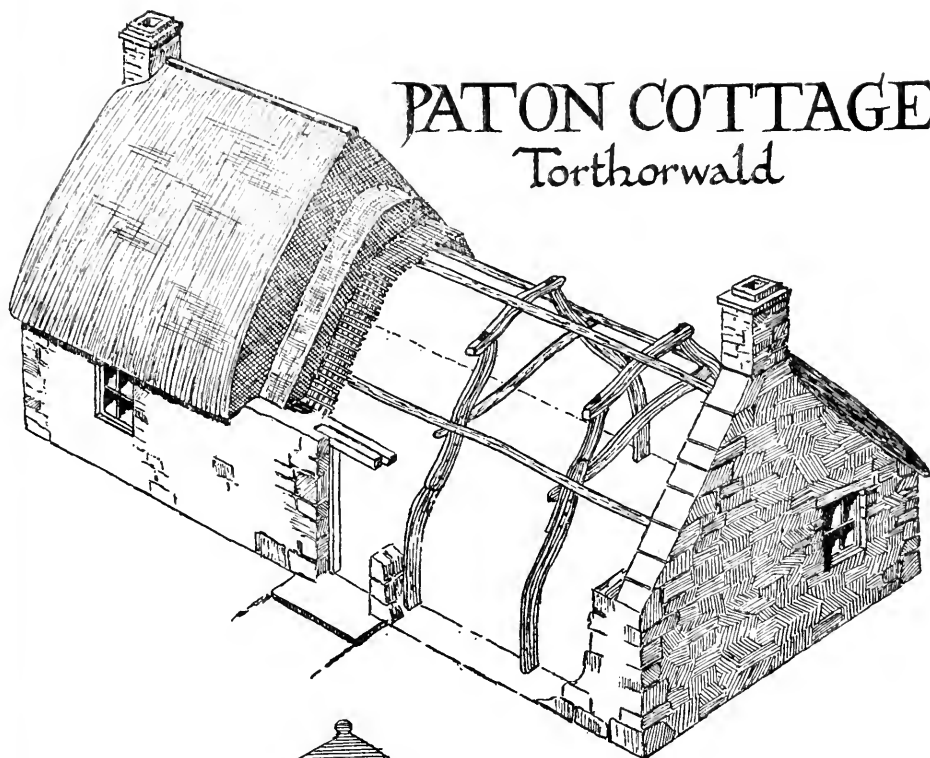
[1] Bartholomew, George: 'The Paton Cottage, Torthorwald', *Trans. Dumfriesshire and Galloway Nat. Hist. and Ant. Soc.*, Vol. XXIX, 1951, pp. 173–6.
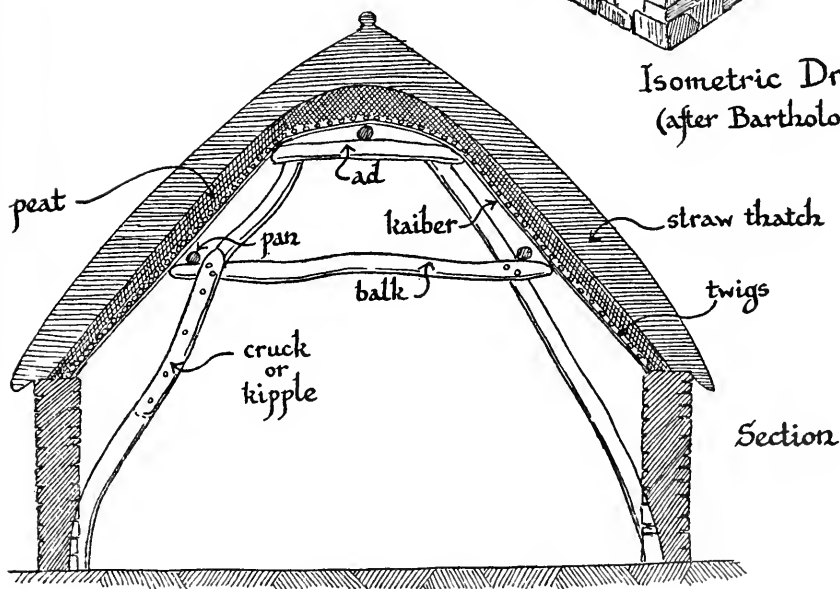[2] Letter from George Bartholomew to the author dated September 27, 1954.
[3] Campbell, Åke: *op. cit.*, p. 226.
[4] Addy, S. O.: *The Evolution of the English House*, 1898, p. 33.

PATON COTTAGE
Torthorwald

Isometric Drawing
(after Bartholomew)

peat

ad

pan

kaiber

balk

cruck
or
kipple

straw thatch

twigs

Section

Walton 1956

FIG. 4

regarded as 'unlucky to widen a house'. Some examples of internal width are:

Kincardine	12 feet
Paton Cottage, Torthorwald	12 ft. 6 ins.
Lilac Cottage, Dull	11 ft. 6 ins.
Hogg's Cottage, Dull	12 ft. 6 ins.
Camserney	13 feet

The use of the *ad* to connect the tops of the couple appears to be associated with the employment of turf for roofing. In order to make a watertight ridge it was found necessary to have at least two layers of turf. With any other type of truss this would have been impossible without producing a very prominent ridge and the desire in Scotland was always to have a flattened or rounded ridge which would offer the least resistance to wind.

The *ad* truss is not confined to Scotland, however, and Estyn Evans and Åke Campbell have described almost identical trusses from Donegal.[1] It occurs, too, in the East and North Ridings of Yorkshire[2] and also in Leicestershire, where Webster has differentiated between a 'saddle', which rests on the tops of the crucks, and a 'yoke', which connects the tops of the crucks by dovetailing.[3] A single example has also been noted from Worcestershire in the barn at Leigh Court. Although all these may have been derived from a common origin or may have resulted from a common need, there is little evidence for connecting the English examples with those from Scotland. The Donegal truss (Fig. 1b) is, however, very similar indeed to those from Scotland and almost certainly belongs to the same tradition. Campbell describes it as follows: 'Very strong couples rest on the walls and are joined by two crossbeams, the lower called *faradh* and the upper *maide mullaigh*. These joining beams are just as strong as the couples themselves. They are joined to the couples by means of one or two wooden pegs on each side. The couples never meet.'

With regard to Irish thatching and roofing, Campbell considers that 'two, perhaps related, but nevertheless unlike traditions have been at work here, namely the scallop thatching, with the highly elevated roof resting on couples that meet each other, on the one hand, and on the other hand hay rope thatching, with the hay ropes fastened to stones, and often a low roof without perceptible ridge resting on a couple construction, where the couples do not join'.[4]

[1] Evans, E. Estyn: 'Donegal Survivals', *Antiquity*, Vol. XIII, 1939, p. 212 and Figs. 5–6. Campbell, Åke: *op. cit.*, pp. 227–8.
[2] Walton, James: 'Cruck-framed Buildings in Yorkshire', *Yorks. Arch. Journ.*, Vol. XXXVII, 1948, pp. 49–66.
[3] Webster, V. R.: 'Cruck-framed Buildings of Leicestershire', *Trans. Leics. Arch. Soc.*, Vol. XXX, 1954, p. 28.
[4] Campbell, Åke: *op. cit.*, pp. 227–8.

None of the examples of buildings with *ad* trusses which I have examined in Scotland retains its original thatching, but a description has been given by Dr. Sinclair. According to information given him by Dugald MacTaggart, of Kilmory, Knapdale, Argyllshire, 'straw, heather, bracken or rushes formed the thatch, which extended over the skews or wall-tops of the gables and was fixed by ropes and anchor stones, the latter lying upon the lower edge of the thatch or hanging over the wall. Sometimes security for the thatch was obtained by the use of a combination of boards or branches with ropes and pegs. The thatch was laid upon a bedwork of sods of which a double layer was placed at the eaves. The rushes, which were commonly employed, were gathered and arranged in bundles and carefully placed with tips downwards in a series of rows, the overlapping and grading being skilfully devised to secure uniformity of thickness.

'For holding down the thatch, straw ropes (*súgán*) were made and hazel twigs in two sets of lengths procured, the shorter being employed as pins and the longer as binding hoops (*sgolban*). The ropes were placed longitudinally and transversely over the roof, a hazel pin being inserted at the crossings of the ropes and driven into the sods. The ends of the horizontal ropes were secured by pins fixed to the edge of the gable sods, with similar pins securing the lower ends of the transverse ropes to the sods at the eaves. The *sgolban* were used to strengthen the lower part of the thatching above the eaves and were interlaced, with each pointed end driven down through the thatch into the sods.'[1] This account is closely in agreement with that of Robert Dinnie, and it would appear to indicate an application of scallop-thatching to an already existing rope method. The sods on the eaves may still be seen on the house at Camserney, although the original thatching has been replaced (Plate 2).

The second type of Scottish cruck construction is the *Crup* truss (Fig. 1c and d), found on Skye and the adjoining mainland. In this the members of the couple cross at the apex to hold the ridge-tree and are joined by a collar-beam or balk. At the base each principal rafter is notched and pegged to an upright post, the *crup*, which either rests on the ground or on the wall footing and which is partly buried in the wall. In later examples the *crup* is shortened to as little as a foot, but even so it still helps to distribute the thrust of the roof on the wall. A similar scarfed construction is found in some Donegal trusses and also in west Wales and western England. In Scotland it is directly associated with the Skye type of building.[2]

The third type appears to be restricted to the Orkneys and Caithness where the truss consists of a pair of curved couples, each made up of two or three short timbers, which are jointed at the apex but do not support

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[1] Sinclair, Colin: *op. cit.*, pp. 42–3.
[2] A detailed account of the Skye house and its associated *crup* truss is in the press.

a ridge-tree (Fig. 1e). Examples of this construction have been described by Aage Roussell and by Sir Cyril Fox.[1] With this type of roof truss the thatch rests on stone slabs which protect the wall top and tilt slightly downwards so as to throw the water off the wall. A similar construction has been noted by Fox in the round-chimneyed farmhouses of northern Pembrokeshire, and it also occurs in a group of ling-thatched barns at Drebley in Wharfedale.

Fox concludes that 'the similar characteristics in north and south Britain must primarily be due to the former existence of common cultural traditions. The link which made a technique common to the two areas was surely provided by seaborne trade and traffic using the "Atlantic route" along the west coast, which we know has disseminated cultures along the "highland zone" of Britain since the 3rd millennium B.C.' The isolated occurrence of a constructional feature in such widely separated areas as Pembrokeshire, Wharfedale and Caithness is hardly sufficient evidence to indicate a diffusion of culture, and examples from other inter-mediate areas have so far not been confirmed. As previously mentioned the associated roof truss in Caithness shows similarities to the Scandinavian *bael'lje*, but it is not possible as yet to establish any connection in this direction.

In conclusion I would like to thank Mr. J. C. Scott of the Glasgow Museums; Mr. George Bartholomew, the County Architect of Dumfries-shire; Mr. Alastair Buchanan; Mr. George Davidson of the Highland Folk Museum, Kingussie; Mr. H. J. H. Drummond of the King's College Library, Aberdeen; and Mr. David Fogo for the help they have given me in the collection of material.

[1] Fox, Cyril: *op. cit.*, pp. 131–3.
Roussell, Aage: *Norse Building Customs in the Scottish Isles*, 1934, p. 46 and Fig. 16.

Thatch and Thatching in North-East Ireland

Ronald H. Buchanan

IN a paper published twenty years ago, the Swedish scholar Åke Campbell wrote: 'The best Irish thatching gives the finest peasant roof in Europe'.[1] Campbell's pioneer work on the traditional house in Ireland has been followed by several regional studies,[2] among which those of Estyn Evans[3] and Caoimhín Ó Danachair[4] are outstanding; but apart from an extensive study by Danachair,[5] based largely on questionnaire returns, no detailed regional study of thatch and thatching techniques in Ireland has so far been published. The thatched roof is both a masterpiece of technical ability and a feat of artistic skill, and the rural thatcher is a craftsman in the truest sense of the word, embodying those personal skills and values which are becoming rare in a world in which standardization and mechanization are the accepted norms, both in life and work. For the student of folk life a study of thatching techniques and their regional distribution is particularly important. Just as the traditional house in its plan and in the variety of its architectural features reflects both environmental and cultural influences, so too technical differences in the construction of the thatched roof reflect how man has sought to protect himself against the rigours of his environment within the limits imposed by the material available locally and the state of his own technical knowledge. Since modern folk-life research is primarily concerned with comparative studies of human cultures and their regional relationships,[6] distribution maps of these technical differences, though of necessity confined to existing examples, provide the only available empirical evidence upon which such wider studies can ultimately be based. At the same time,

[1] Campbell, Åke: 'Notes on the Irish House', *Folkliv*, 1 (1937), p. 228.
[2] See, for example, Meidhre, Séan Mac Giolla: 'Some Notes on Irish Farm-houses', *Béaloideas*, 8 (1938), pp. 196–201.
    Muhlhausen, L.: 'Contributions to the study of the Tangible Material Culture of the Gaoltacht', *Jn. Cork Hist. and Archaeol. Soc.*, 38 and 39 (1933 and 1934), pp. 67–71 and 41–51.
    McCourt, D.: 'The Outshot House-type and its Distribution in County Londonderry', *Ulster Folklife*, 2 (1956), pp. 27–34.
[3] Evans, E. Estyn: 'The Ulster Farmhouse', *Ulster Folklife*, 1 (1955), pp. 27 *et seq.*
[4] Danachair, C. Ó: 'Stand und Aufgaben der Hausforschung in Ireland', *Bericht über die Arbeitstagung des Arbeitskreises für deutsche Hausforschung e. V. in Schleswig* (1955), pp. 29–50.
[5] Danachair, C. Ó: 'The Questionnaire System', *Béaloideas*, 15 (1945), pp. 203–17.
[6] Erixon, Sigurd: 'Introduction to Folklife Research', *Folkliv* 14–15 (1950–1), pp. 5–15.

the thatched roof is but one element of the many which are embodied in the traditional house, although it is a significant one, for in Ireland thatch forms the traditional roofing material.[1] A study of thatching techniques and their regional distribution is therefore mainly a preliminary to a wider study of the peasant house, although it can yield important material for later syntheses. The aim of this paper, then, is to discuss the main techniques used in constructing thatched roofs in the six counties of north-east Ireland, and to show the regional distribution of the main types as they exist to-day. The material upon which this study is based was collected during an extensive field survey in 1954–5, and I have also examined MS. material collected by the Irish Folk-lore Commission, based on questionnaires sent out during 1945.

To-day the thatched roof is rapidly disappearing from the Irish rural landscape. Some years ago it was estimated that less than one-quarter of the rural houses in Ulster had thatched roofs,[2] and the proportion must be considerably less to-day. Time and again one travels a country road to find that yet another cottage has shed its familiar thatch in favour of the more durable if less picturesque roof of galvanized iron. Many factors have brought about this change. Of primary importance is the fact that the thatched roof is composed of perishable materials. In the words of one countryman: '. . . it's a bothersome roof—ye're niver done mendin' an' patchin' at it'. The decline in acreage of grain crops makes this an important consideration to-day, for good wheat straw for thatching costs between 25s. and 30s. per hundredweight, and 30 hundredweight of straw is usually required to thatch the average three-roomed house. Since even the best thatch of wheat straw needs to be completely renewed at least once in every fourteen years, this recurrent expense makes the roof of galvanized iron much more attractive economically. A lack of competent thatchers is a further factor leading to the disappearance of the thatched roof. The many 'patched' or mended roofs so evident in the countryside to-day, show that the local handyman has taken over the work of the professional, and a general decline in the standard of craftsmanship has been the inevitable result. Thatching is indeed a dying craft, although the good craftsman can still command an attractive wage. In itself this is another cause of decline, for high wages further increase the cost of keeping the thatch in good repair.

Not only is it a costly business to keep the roof watertight, but thatch is also highly inflammable, and once it catches fire the whole house is likely to be completely destroyed. Thus insurance rates on a thatched

[1] Campbell, Åke: op. cit., p. 226.
[2] Evans, E. Estyn: Northern Ireland (London, 1951), p. 43.

house are on average ten times higher than those on an ordinary dwelling,* and this factor may affect the decision to remove a thatched roof. More difficult to estimate but equally significant is the question of social prestige. The desire to keep up with the O'Hagans is as present among country people as it is with the town-bred Jones, and the 'new-fangled' roof, whether it be of slate or galvanized iron, does gives its owner a certain prestige, especially at the present time when traditional rural values are being steadily undermined by urban ways.

Undoubtedly rural housing will gain much in hygiene and general comfort from the passing of the thatched roof. At the same time, it will lose much of value, not least in aesthetic appearance, for the thatched roof gives the traditional house a regional character which is so often lacking in modern rural houses. On the practical side, too, the thatched roof is well adapted to the climatic conditions of the local environment. Thatch is non-conducting since it is composed of organic material, and it is much more efficient in maintaining an equable temperature within the house than its modern usurpers: 'it's warm in winter an' cool in summer'. The well-thatched roof can also often withstand the force of winter gales more effectively than the slated roof. A Belfast newspaper recently reported that while many new houses in a country district had lost slates and tiles during a severe storm, the thatched roofs of older houses had remained virtually intact.[1] Changes in roofing materials, however, are but one aspect of the revolutionary economic and social changes affecting rural life as a whole. To the younger people such changes are welcome and necessary, but among the older generation the old ways die hard. In the words of one old countryman, watching a younger neighbour putting a galvanized iron roof on his house: ' . . . he's hammering there on the lazyman's roof. Thon will be an ill-natured contraption. Och, he'll live to regret the warm straw! Work that takes time and thought is good work. Tell him from me that's only a makeshift.'[2]

THATCHING MATERIALS

An integral part of the thatched roof in north-east Ireland is a layer of sod or 'scraws', laid directly on the laths and purlins which form the timber framework. As I have been told: 'They make fer heat an' they help to hold the scollops'. This layer is almost universal throughout the six counties, although an undercoating of straw, sewn directly to the roof

[1] *The Belfast Newsletter*, Thursday, February 26, 1957.
[2] MacLaverty, Michael: *In This Thy Day* (London, 1945), p. 27.

* The rates vary between 15s. to one guinea per cent on thatched property, compared with 1s. 6d. per cent on slated dwellings. This rate has tended to harden in recent years, and one large company now refuses to insure any thatched property. I am indebted to Mr. E. Armour, B.Comm.Sc., for this information.

timbers with *súgán* or straw rope, is recorded as having been used instead of scraws in the Slieve Gullion region of south Armagh.[1]   Another method was noted by Estyn Evans some years ago in the Lecale peninsula of Co. Down where a matting of woven straw, similar to that in the Kennixton house in the Welsh Folk Museum at St. Fagans, had been used instead of scraws, but this seems to be the only recorded example from north-east Ireland.

In most parts of the six counties the scraws were cut in long strips, 20 feet or more in length by 2 feet wide and 2 to 3 inches thick. These were cut long enough to stretch from wall-plate to ridge-beam, which they overlapped by about a foot. The scraws were cut, as one Ballymena thatcher told me, from 'a spretty cheugh meadow—none of yer cindry sods'll do'. That is to say, the sod must be tough, the roots and fibres binding it tightly together so that it will bed down solidly on the roof timbers. After it had been cut, using the flatcher[2] or an ordinary spade, it was beaten to remove all the loose earth, which would otherwise tend to retain moisture, and trimmed with a hook. The strip was then rolled up, and when it had dried was carried to the building site and unrolled over the roof timbers, the grassy side upwards so that the thatch would be gripped more firmly. In most parts of the country the sods themselves were not fastened directly to the roof timbers, for the weight of the long strips was sufficient to keep the whole mass firm and stable. Sometimes, however—for example, in the Mourne Mountain region of Co. Down—the sods were sewn to the roof timbers with *súgán*, or nowadays manilla rope. This additional safeguard was essential where the long strip sod was not used. In a few places—for example, near Cookstown in east Tyrone and Killyleagh in east Down—small sods measuring 3 feet by 2 feet by 2 inches might be used instead, and these were invariably sewn directly to the roof timbers.

In choosing the thatching material, the principal consideration is its durability; the length of time it will last and keep the roof watertight. This is restricted in the first instance by the materials that are available locally, and secondly by their relative cost. Excluding the question of situation, which applies only to individual houses, the length of time a thatched roof will remain watertight does vary considerably according to the materials used. In a paper published some years ago,[3] it was suggested that flax is the most durable straw, but local opinions seem to differ greatly as to its merits. Certainly it has one advantage in that the straw tends to be short, and as one Co. Antrim thatcher told me: 'it has a hollow core, an' it'll rot easily'. My impression is that flax is preferred only when

[1] Irish Folk-lore Commission MS. 1079, pp. 217–18.
[2] Evans, E. Estyn: *Irish Heritage* (Dundalk, 1942), p. 135.
[3] Mogey, J. M.: 'Thatch', *Ulster Jn. Archaeol.*, 3 (1940), p. 134.

the commercial price of the crop is low, and it becomes more economic to use it rather than wheat straw, although Evans has noted that flax was grown especially for thatching in north-west Donegal.[1] To-day it is extensively used only in north-east Fermanagh, north Armagh and west Derry. Rye, which was widely used for thatching in England because of its durability,[2] is restricted in its distribution in Ulster to-day. I have seen only a few examples in south-west Antrim and around the western shores of Lough Neagh, although on the sandy soils of Magilligan, on the coast of north Derry, a small quantity of rye is still grown exclusively for thatching.[3]   Wheat is by far the most common straw used for thatching throughout the six counties, and in most localities it seems to be used in preference to all other straws. Its durability compares favourably with flax and rye, and it is estimated that the thatch will last from eight to fourteen years.* Wheat straw is also popular with thatchers, for it tends to grow to a more uniform length, has the cleanest stalk and consequently requires less preparation than the other straws. Oat straw, on the other hand, is much less durable and will last for not more than five or six years; the straw is soft, easily broken and is particularly vulnerable to attack by birds and rodents. It is used only when other materials are too costly or are otherwise not easily available, and therefore occurs sporadically throughout the six counties, principally in the upland areas. Poorer substitutes which are also occasionally used, especially on outbuildings, include marram grass and heather, and I have also seen byres roughly thatched with potato haulms. Reed thatch is rarely found in Ulster, and I have seen only a few examples on the south-east shores of Lough Neagh, although formerly it seems to have been used much more extensively in this area.[4]   Rushes (*juncus* species) are a little more widespread in their distribution, and are used for thatching outbuildings and occasionally dwellings in some of the upland regions of Tyrone, Fermanagh and south Armagh, and in the damp, marshy lowlands of the Bann valley.

Where straw is used, care is always taken in its preparation. Straw which has passed through a mechanical thresher is of little use in thatching, for the stalks get crushed and broken, and will rot quickly when exposed on the roof. Instead the straw is either 'hand-scutched', by holding the tops of the sheaves against the beaters in the threshing machine, or else is 'lashed'; that is, beaten gently against a wall or the back of a chair to remove

[1] Evans, E. Estyn: 'Donegal Survivals', *Antiquity*, 13 (1939), p. 214.

[2] Innocent, C. F.: *The Development of English Building Construction* (Cambridge, 1916), p. 191.

[3] Christie, E. H.: *A Regional Survey of the Flat Lands of Magilligan and Myroe* (Hons. Geography B.A. Dissertation, Queen's University, Belfast, 1950), p. 27.

[4] Lavery, G.: *Land Utilization in the Montiaghs of Antrim* (Hons. Geography B.A. Dissertation, Queens' University, Belfast, 1952), p. 8.

* Since durability depends on so many factors these estimates are purely qualitative and are based on the opinions of individual thatchers.

the grain. The sheaves are then 'drawn' by hand to shake out the smaller straws, and made into bundles of uniform size which are then stacked ready for thatching. To-day the bundles are frequently soaked in a solution of 'bluestone' (copper sulphate), which both helps to preserve the straw and to discourage the harmful attention of birds and insects in the finished thatch. In one particular method of thatching, the bundles are soaked in water for several days immediately before use. The straw is then separated into smaller bunches or 'stapples', which are piled in a heap, one on top of the other, and the whole mass weighted down with heavy stones. So far as I know this preparation is used only in stapple thatch (see below). Not only does it make the straw more pliable and easier to work, but also, in the words of one thatcher: 'When the straw heats up there's a sort of oil comes out of it, an' it makes the whole stapple as tight as a slate'.

THATCHING TECHNIQUES

Roped Thatch

This method of thatching is perhaps the simplest of all to construct, but it is rarely found on houses in north-east Ireland to-day. In the method shown in Fig. 1 the thatcher begins his work at the eave, laying several bundles of straw directly on the scraws above the wall-plate, with the ear end facing towards the ridge. Sometimes the bundles in this first course may be doubled in two to give a greater thickness of straw at the eave and to give a correct pitch to the finished roof. A second course is then placed to overlap the first so that not more than about 1 foot of the underlying course is left exposed: this is repeated until the ridge is reached. Sometimes the straw is not laid deliberately in bundles, but may be merely shaken out on the roof in layers some 6 to 9 inches deep. Where this method is used, however, the thatcher still works in courses 2 to 3 feet wide, which are placed to overlap each other as described above. When both sides of the roof have been covered, a thin layer of straw is laid horizontally on top of the thatch parallel to the ridge. Sometimes this is laid only along the ridge but the rest of the roof may also be covered in a similar way to prevent the ropes from sinking into the thatch.

When the roof is completely covered, roping begins. In the old days súgán was always used, but to-day tarred manilla rope or even wire is the more usual substitute. The first rope is laid along the eave, the thatcher securing one end to the gable while his helper carries the rope along the roof by means of a hay-fork. These horizontal ropes are usually placed about 1 foot or 18 inches apart. 'Easin' ropes'—that is, vertical ropes which run across the ridge—are also used on all the roped thatch houses I have seen in the six counties, so that the typical roped thatch of the area consists

of a close network of ropes placed both horizontally and vertically. Some variation occurs in the method of securing the rope to the walls of the house. Usually, both horizontal and vertical ropes are fastened to iron pegs driven into the gables and just below the wall-plate respectively, but
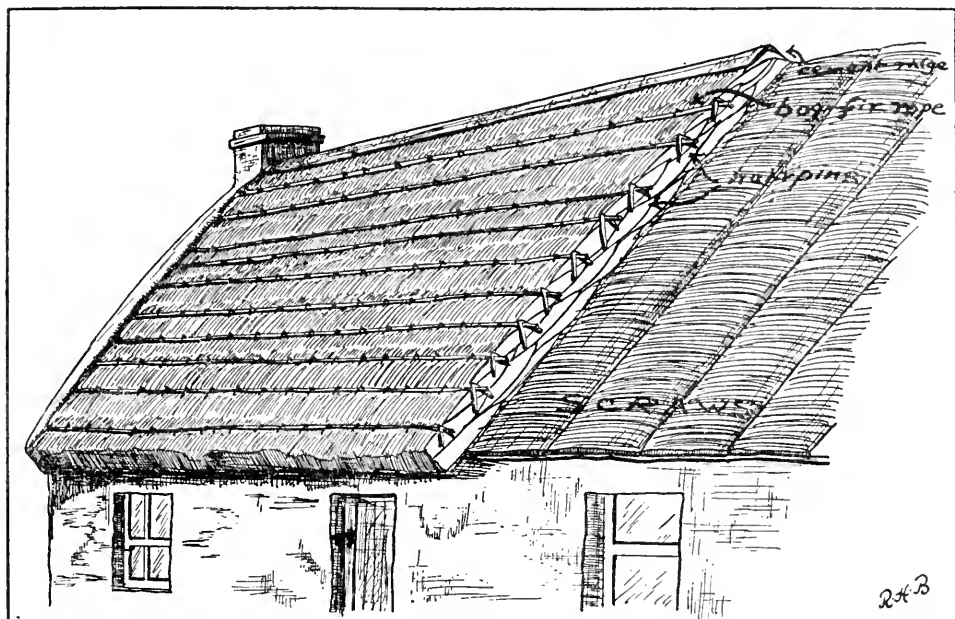

FIG. 1. ROPED THATCH: Cloghy, Strangford, Co. Down.

occasionally stones are used to secure the easin' ropes instead. These may be placed to hang just below the eave, in which case wooden laths are used to prevent the ropes from cutting too deeply into the thatch; or alternatively they may lie directly on the thatch just above the eave. Stones have one advantage in that the ropes are always kept taut, although where the stones lie directly on the roof, the thatch tends to rot more quickly. The use of stones is on the whole uncommon in north-east Ireland, and I have found only two examples, in Co. Down and Co. Derry respectively.

The main virtue of roped thatch lies in the simplicity of its construction, and in the fact that it is well adapted to withstand strong winds. The straw is not fastened directly to the roof framework, but the whole thatch structure is securely fastened to the walls of the house by the interlaced network of ropes. House and roof therefore form one tightly interlocked unit, and this added stability means that roped thatch can withstand continued exposure to strong winds more efficiently than any other method

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of thatching. Its efficiency is further increased by the low pitch of the roof, a feature which seems to be invariably associated with roped thatch in north-east Ireland. Indeed, I have been told that the hall-mark of good roped thatch is to have the roof 'rounded like a pig's back'. This almost streamlined appearance is increased by the fact that the gables never rise above the level of the thatch. The picturesque stepped gables of Co. Mayo[1] and the western coastlands are not found in the north-east, and frequently, indeed, a shallow covering of thatch may even be laid across the tops of the gables themselves. Continued exposure to a harsh environment hastens the decay of the thatch and means that the ropes need constantly to be renewed. Four or five years is the maximum period a roped thatch roof can be expected to last before it needs to be completely rethatched. Fortunately it is simple to construct, and unlike the other methods of thatching it does not require the services of a professional. Instead it needs the communal labour of a team of four or five men, who between them can rope and thatch a house completely within a day or two.

Scollop Thatch

The basic principle of this, the most common method of thatching used in north-east Ireland to-day, is that each individual bundle of straw is secured separately to the scraw immediately beneath it by thin rods, locally known as 'scollops' or 'scobes'. These rods are usually of hazel or willow, although for making 'hairpin' scollops the more pliable if less durable 'tay-bush suckers' (snowberry) are preferred. True scollop thatching is a skilled job, requiring the services of a professional thatcher, who will normally take at least eight days to thatch the average three-roomed house.

Scollop thatching varies slightly in detail from one district to another, the greatest variation occurring in the method of securing the straw to the roof. The two principal methods are shown in Figs. 2 and 3. These are not confined exclusively to the areas mentioned, but may be found practised side by side in widely separated parts of the country. In the first method shown (Fig. 2), the thatcher begins his work at the eave, taking a bundle of straw, which is already prepared in lengths of between 2 and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and placing it on the roof, ear end facing towards the ridge. He then separates the bundles into smaller bunches, each about 6 inches wide, and secures these to the roof by means of a 'hairpin' scollop. The hairpin is a thin rod about 2 feet in length, whose ends have been sharpened to pierce the underlying straw and/or scraw. The rod is bent in two by the thatcher, who at the same time twists it against the grain so that a lateral pressure is exerted by the rod trying to regain its original shape. This pressure helps to keep the bunch of straw quite tight. Each bunch is

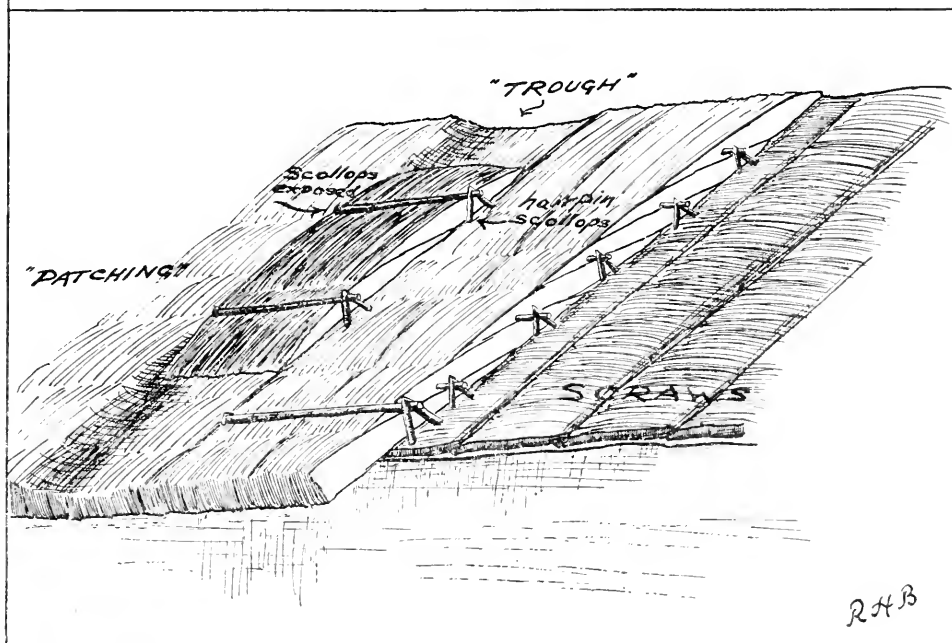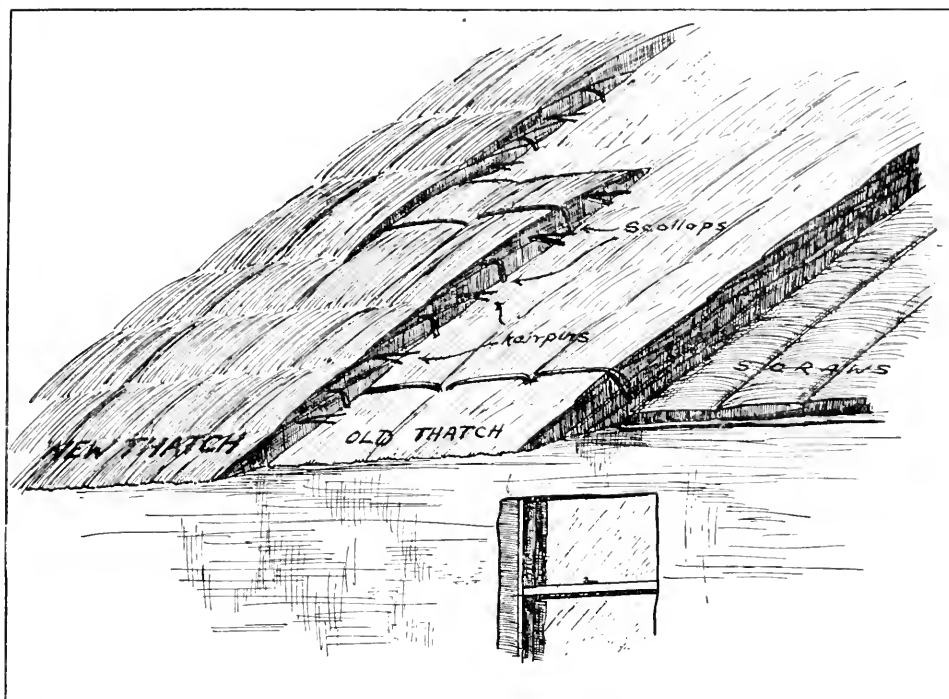[1] Cf., for example, Evans, E. Estyn: *Antiquity*, 13 (1939), plate iii.

FIG. 2–3. SCOLLOP THATCH
2. Gloonan, Gracehill, Co. Antrim.   3. Ballygowan, Hillsborough, Co. Down.

usually secured by two hairpins, placed near the ear and butt respectively, while a further hairpin may be driven into the roof at the side of the bunch as an additional means of keeping the straw packed tight. Care is taken when securing the hairpins to see that these are driven in horizontally and not at right angles to the plane of the roof (Fig. 2); otherwise rain-water tends to seep into the under thatch. Several bunches laid side by side in this way form a 'spar', which is usually not more than 2 feet in width. When these first bunches have each been laid and secured with hairpins, the thatcher places a 'fastenin'-scobe'—that is, a rod bent into a staple or U-shape—across all the bunches in the spar as an additional means of securing the straw to the roof. The next course of bunches is laid in a similar way, overlapping the first so that both the hairpins and the fastening-scobe are completely covered, and only 6 to 8 inches of the underlying course is exposed on the finished roof. Since none of the scollops is left uncovered this method is frequently known as 'blind-scobing'. A slightly different method of securing the bundles is shown in Fig. 3. Here only the fastening-scobe is used to secure the bunches in any particular course to the roof, and hairpins are dispensed with. The fastening-scobe in this particular example is not bent into a staple, but consists of a single rod, laid across the several bunches in the spar, and secured by two or three hairpins driven into the underlying scraws. This method is not quite so efficient as the first since the straw cannot be kept so tightly packed without the use of hairpin scollops.

When one spar has been completed from eave to ridge, the thatcher starts on the second, working in the same way and continuing until the roof is finished. Each spar as it is finished is trimmed down from the ridge with a thatching knife, usually the hafted middle portion of an old scythe blade. Such trimming is necessary to keep an even slope on the finished roof so that rain-water will run off quickly. Particular care is taken when thatching the ridge, for this is the most exposed and vulnerable part of the roof. When the ridge is reached the last bunches are laid in the usual way, two-thirds of each bunch being placed on one side of the roof and the remaining third overlapping on to the other side. One fastening-scobe covering the width of the spar is placed across the tails of the bunches, and a second is placed over the heads where these overlap on to the other side of the roof. The scobes are of necessity left exposed on the finished roof, and frequently an additional row of exposed scollops is added along-side. A similar row or two of exposed scollops is also usually placed on the thatch just above the eave, where the projecting roof is subjected to considerable wind-lift. In mid-Antrim, and a few other areas, the 'easin' rod' is sometimes used instead. This is a long, heavy lath or iron rod which runs the entire length of the roof and is placed about 2 feet back from

the eave. Sometimes, particularly in the Lagan valley and parts of south Tyrone, the exposed scollops at the eave and ridge are worked into lozenge patterns, but such ornamentation is extremely rare by comparison with similar thatching in southern England.

In an inferior method of scollop thatch the fastening-scobes themselves may also be left exposed on the roof. This method is most frequently used in 'patching', that is, in making a temporary repair where portions of thatch have decayed on the roof. Thatch decays most quickly at the edge of the spars, where the straw is less tightly packed, forming a line of weakness which is quickly exploited by rain-water running off the roof. Where such 'troughs' or 'gutters' occur, fresh bundles of straw may be placed in the roof and secured with fastening-scobes (see Fig. 3). Patching, however, is only a temporary measure, for when fresh straw is mixed with old thatch the former quickly deteriorates, and rain-water seeping into the thatch along the exposed scollops hastens the process of decay. In some parts of the western counties blind-scobing never seems to have been used, and the inferior practice of securing the thatch with exposed scollops was the only method employed. Thatching with exposed scollops is becoming increasingly common throughout the country to-day, and probably reflects the decline in numbers of professional thatchers. Exposed scollop thatching can be done by the occupier or the local handyman, but it requires constant attention and on average will last only five or six years. On the other hand, a roof thatched with good wheat straw and secured with blind-scobes can last for twelve or thirteen years before needing to be rethatched. Blind-scobing, however, is essentially a skilled job for the professional craftsman. It requires high technical ability, and unlike most other methods of Irish thatching, a range of specialized tools. These are a knife for trimming the roof, a small hand-rake for removing the loose straws from the finished thatch, clippers to trim the straw at the eaves and a hand-leather to protect the palm of the hand when pushing in the hairpin scollops. The mallet used by the English thatcher to drive scollops into the roof is not used so frequently, for it tends to damage the slender rods used by the Irish thatcher. In some areas a thatching needle is also used. This is a rod of iron some 3 feet long, with an eye at one end where it is sharpened to a point. The thatching needle is used where the first layer of thatch on a new roof is sewn directly to the scraws and roof timbers with *súgán*. I have seen only one example of this, in east Co. Down, but it has also been reported from the Mourne Mountain region of the same county[1] and from south Armagh.[2] Only

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[1] Evans, E. Estyn: *Mourne Country* (Dundalk, 1951), p. 185.
[2] Irish Folk-lore Commission MS. 1079, p. 217.

the first coat of thatch seems to have been sewn in these particular examples, and all subsequent layers were secured by scollops in the usual way.

Pegged Thatch

One method of thatching which seems to be little more than a variation of scollop thatch is illustrated in Fig. 4. Beginning from the gable, bunches
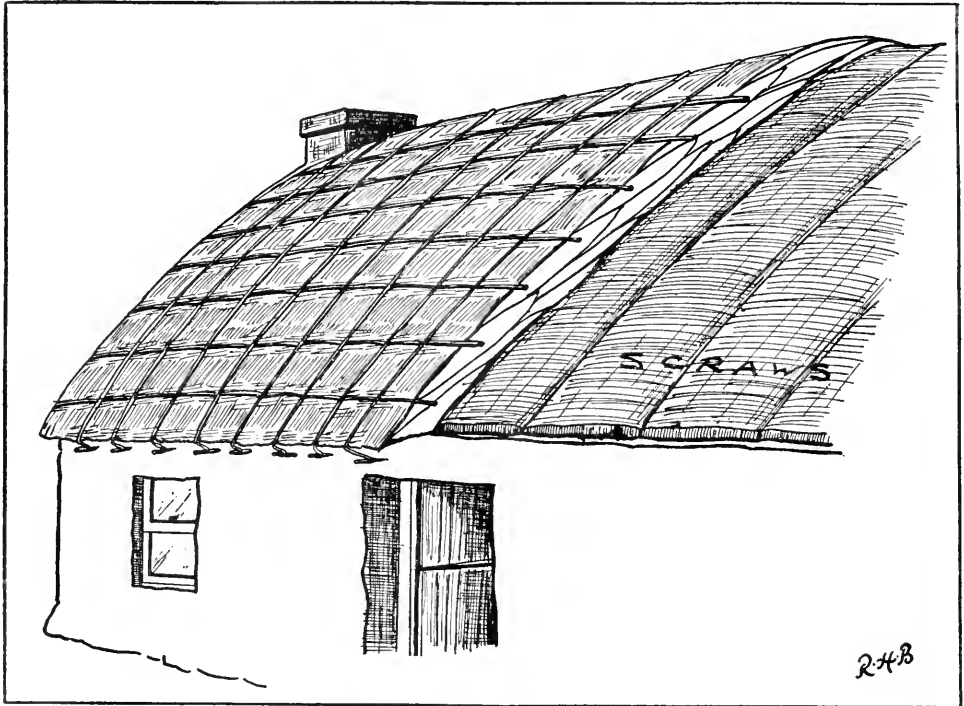

FIG. 4. PEGGED THATCH: Ballintoy, Co. Antrim.

of straw are placed on the roof as in scollop thatch, but the individual bunches are not held down with hairpin scollops nor are the fastening-scobes used to secure the bundles in a spar. Instead each individual course is held down by horizontal bands of twisted 'bog-fir' rope,[1] placed at intervals of 2 feet on the roof. The ropes are secured either with ordinary hairpin scollops placed at intervals of a foot (as in Fig. 4), or with wooden pegs, driven through the intersecting strands of the rope. This method is extremely limited in its distribution, and is to be found only along the northern coast of Co. Antrim.

[1] Mogey, J. M.: 'Fir-rope: A Dying Craft', *Ulster Jn. Archaeol.*, 1 (1938), p. 152.

Stapple Thatch

Stapple thatch is found to-day only in the Lecale peninsula of south-east Co. Down, but although its present distribution is limited, the technique is important in that a fundamentally different method of fastening the straw to the roof is employed. The basic difference is that the straw is first of all made into tightly-knotted bundles called 'stapples', measuring between 2 and 3 feet in length, which are then secured to the roof with courses of mud.[1]

Stapple thatch was formerly always the work of a professional thatcher, but to-day only a few handymen continue to practise the craft. Beginning at the gable, the thatcher lays a course of several stapples along the eave, the butts facing the eave and the knotted end pointing towards the ridge. This first course is between 18 inches and 2 feet wide, the width of the average spar on the scollop-thatched roof. Usually a layer of mud is placed under the heads of the stapples in this first course to give the correct pitch to the roof, although shorter bunches of straw, doubled and tied, may be used instead. After the first course of stapples has been laid on the roof, the heads of the stapples are covered with a layer of mud about 9 inches wide and several inches deep. The mud is laid on damp with a trowel, and is then stamped in on the roof so that the stapples are firmly held together. I have been told that the old thatchers always used a fine gritty mud scraped from the roadside 'sheughs' (ditches), which they mixed with animal dung to make it bind more firmly: 'An' when it dried it wud set as hard as concrete!'. A second course of stapples is then laid in the same way, overlapping the first so that not more than 6 to 9 inches of the underlying course is left exposed on the roof. Sometimes each course of stapples is covered with a layer of mud, but more usually the mud is laid only at three places on the roof: along the eave, about the middle of the roof and just below the ridge (Fig. 5). The thatcher works in courses and spars as in scollop thatch, until the roof is covered. When the ridge is reached, bunches of straw which are not knotted into stapples are bent across the ridge-beam, the loose ends being secured with a row of exposed scollops. These are usually 'sally' (willow) rods, bent into a staple shape. Frequently in stapple thatch the ridge is capped with a mud coping, forming a ridging running the length of the roof, although to-day cement is mostly used instead. Where the mud coping was used, the scollops were sometimes dispensed with, and this may well have been the older method. To-day a row of exposed scollops is almost invariably placed above the eave, but these are never worked into ornamental patterns as in scollop thatch.

[1]Buchanan, R. H.: 'Stapple Thatch', *Ulster Folklife*, 3 (1957), forthcoming.

Thrust Thatch

A fifth method of thatching has been described by Danachair[1] as occurring in parts of south and east Ulster, although I have been unable to find any examples of it surviving in these areas to-day. In this method the first layer of thatch is usually sewn directly to the roof timbers, using
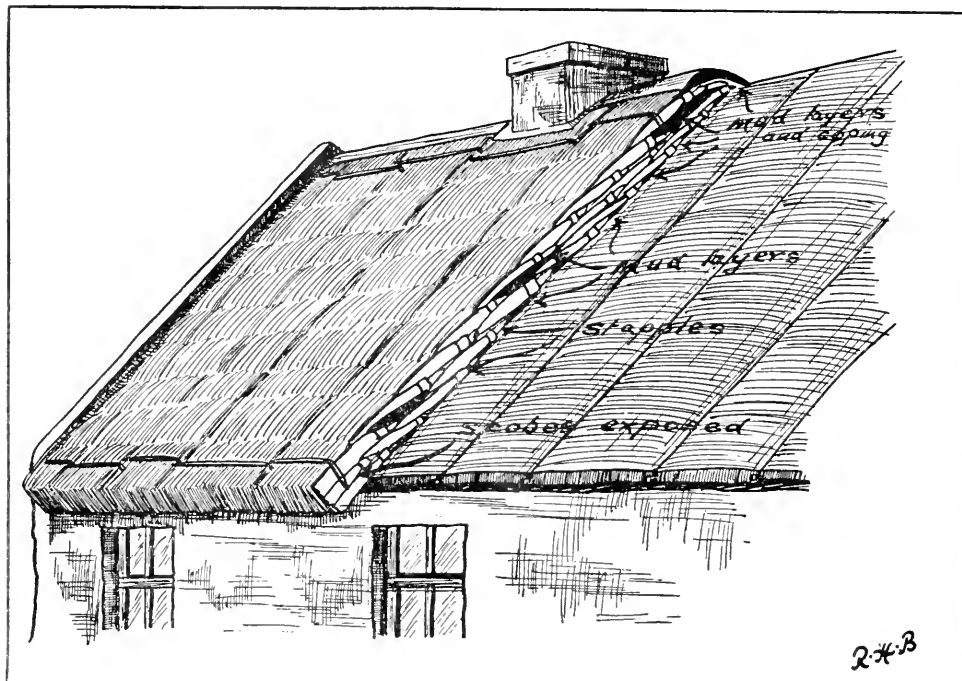

FIG. 5. STAPPLE THATCH: Bright, Downpatrick, Co. Down.

the thatching needle. When rethatching, the thatcher takes a handful of straw, twists the ear into a knot and thrusts it into the underlying straw with a small, two-pronged fork, or 'spurtle'. The knot catches in the underlying straw on the roof and is firmly held. In one example from south Armagh, however, it was stated that the knotted bunches or *currags* were thrust directly into the scraws,[2] and were afterwards sewn to the scraws with *súgán* as an additional security. When the first bunch has been placed on the roof others are laid beside it, and are beaten down to make them lie tightly together. The thatcher works in courses and spars as on the scollop-thatched roof, and after one spar is finished the straw is damped and then beaten again to make the bunches 'bed together'. Rows of

[1] Danachair, C. Ó: *Béaloideas*, 15 (1945), p. 213.
[2] Irish Folk-lore Commission MS. 1079, pp. 219-21.

exposed scollops are then placed at eave and ridge as a security against wind-lift.

The Flat Roof

In the so-called 'flat roof'[1] organic material is also used as a roof-covering, but the method can scarcely be dignified with the title of thatch. It is extremely simple to construct, and is to be found occasionally on carthouses and other outbuildings throughout most of the six counties. The flat roof can be used only on buildings which are sufficiently narrow to be spanned by horizontal beams or branches, stretching from wall to wall. On this framework is piled a superstructure of potato haulms, whins (gorse), old straw or similar farm rubbish. The whole is then roughly covered with bundles of straw or even hay, and secured with ropes or netting wire, the finished roof assuming a rounded form. The flat roof is certainly the least efficient method of thatching, but it does provide a temporary cover which is quick to erect and requires little skill to construct. A similar method of roof construction was also known in the Outer Hebrides,[2] and certainly its widespread occurrence in north-east Ireland to-day would suggest it was more commonly used in earlier times for roofing temporary structures.

REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

The distribution of the main techniques of thatching used in north-east Ireland to-day is shown on Fig. 6, and is based on a field survey of 1,458 thatched houses throughout the province. This figure represents only a fraction of the existing thatched houses, as there are many areas for which detailed evidence is lacking. In part this is due to the unequal distribution of thatched houses throughout the six counties to-day. The main areas of survival are concentrated principally in the lowlands fringing Lough Neagh, in the valleys of the Lagan, the Main and the lower Bann in east Ulster, and in the lowlands of east Co. Down. Further west thatched houses are still common in the isolated upland regions of Co. Tyrone and south Derry, and in Co. Fermanagh at least one house in four still retains its traditional roof. Elsewhere the thatched roof is becoming increasingly uncommon. It is rarely found in the uplands of Co. Down and in the Mourne Mountain region, and it has virtually disappeared from the rich lowlands of Co. Armagh and the coastlands and interior plateau of Co. Antrim. Despite the scattered nature of the evidence, the boundaries of the different techniques can be marked with reasonable accuracy for the main types tend to be mutually exclusive.

[1] Evans, E. Estyn: *Irish Heritage* (Dundalk, 1942), p. 85 and Fig. 42.
[2] Innocent, C. F.: *op. cit.*, p. 202.

The distribution map, based on surviving field evidence, is broadly similar to that prepared by Danachair from questionnaire returns made some twelve years earlier.[1] It shows that roped thatch today is exclusively coastal in its distribution. It is the only method of thatching used on Rathlin Island[2] and along the narrow coastal strip of north Derry, while in the south-east isolated examples are found along the coasts of the Lecale peninsula and the Mournes. Scanty traditional evidence suggests that roped thatch was the normal method used along the east coast of Co. Antrim, but no thatched houses survive here to-day. This restricted coastal distribution is by no means peculiar to north-east Ireland, for it is a pattern familiar throughout the British Isles and on the mainland of continental Europe. Roped thatch is the dominant method of thatching on the coastlands of western Ireland,[3] of Scotland[4] and the Isle of Man,[5] while Campbell states that in Europe it occurs mainly along the Atlantic and North Sea coasts.[6]

Pegged thatch, on the other hand, is much more restricted in its distribution, being confined to the north Antrim coast. Since it contains elements both of the roped and scollop techniques it may perhaps represent a fusion of two different traditions in response to the climatic conditions of the coastlands. Pegged thatch is known elsewhere in Ireland only in the Cashla–Lettmore district of west Co. Galway,[7] but it does not seem to be known in Britain, although Sinclair notes that in Argyll *súgán* is secured to the thatch with hazel pegs in a similar manner.[8] This parallel may well be significant in view of the close cultural relationships that have for long existed between north Antrim and south-west Scotland. Another type of thatch which is strictly limited in its distribution is the stapple thatch of south-east Co. Down. This technique is confined almost exclusively to the Lecale peninsula, although a few scattered examples in the foothills to the north of the Mournes suggest it may formerly have been more widely practised. Stapple thatch has not been recorded elsewhere in Ireland, nor have I found reference to any similar technique being used in contemporary English thatching. Innocent, however, quotes a MS. account of materials bought for thatching in Leicester in 1517, which includes a load of clay, and for Ripon in 1399, in which only straw and clay are mentioned.[9] He considers that this clay was probably used to mix with the straw as a means of preserving the thatch and making it more durable, a practice known in Oxford in the late seventeenth

[1] Danachair, C. Ó: *Béaloideas*, 15 (1945), Fig. 2, p. 210.
[2] I am indebted to Mr. L. W. Hanna for this information.   [3] Danachair, C. Ó: *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[4] Sinclair, C.: *Thatched Houses of the Old Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1952).
See also, Curwen, E. C.: 'The Hebrides: A Cultural Backwater', *Antiquity*, 12 (1938), p. 264.
[5] Innocent, C. F.: *op. cit.*, p. 202.   [6] Campbell, Åke: *op. cit.*, p. 202.
[7] Danachair, C. Ó: *op. cit.*, p. 212.   [8] Sinclair, C.: *op. cit.*, p. 43.
[9] Innocent, C. F.: *op. cit.*, pp. 219 and 220.

ROPED

RATHLIN I.

PEGGED

DONEGAL

LONDONDERRY

ANTRIM

TYRONE

SCOLLOP

LOUGH
NEAGH

FERMANAGH

ARMAGH

DOWN

STAPPLE

▲ ROPED
● SCOLLOP
+ STAPPLE

Thatch types isolated from main
areas of distribution
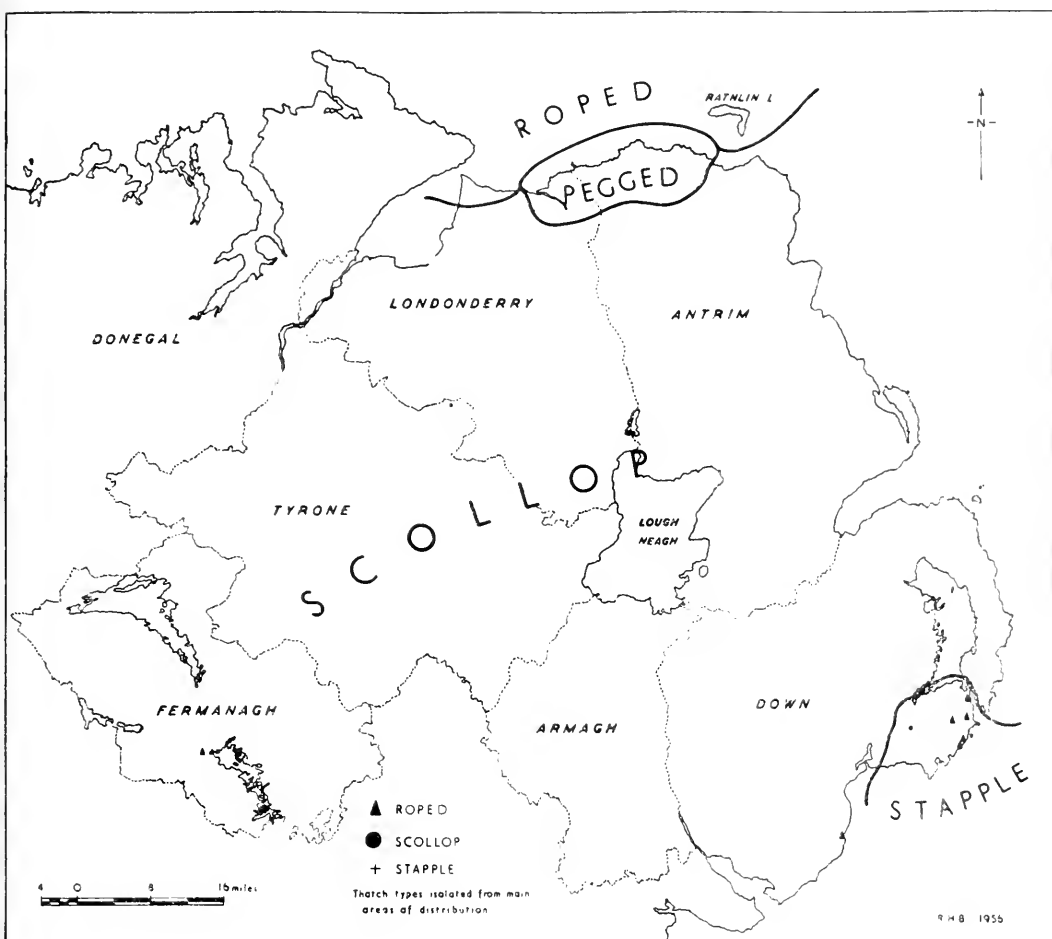
4   O   8   16 miles

R H B 1955

FIG. 6

century,[1] or else was used for forming the ridge. This may well have been the case in Leicester where straw ropes seem to have been used to secure the thatch, but the evidence from Ripon appears to be less satisfactory. Here courses of mud may well have been used to secure the straw as in the stapple thatch of Co. Down.

To-day scollop thatching is by far the most common and the most widespread method used, not only in north-east Ireland but throughout the country as a whole. The actual technique of securing the straw differs slightly from one region to another, probably due to differences in inherited tradition, for scollop thatch is essentially the work of individual craftsmen. These variations may be locally significant, but the basic method is essentially the same throughout the entire region. The scollop thatch of north-east Ireland seems to be closely similar to that of south Wales[2] and the English lowlands, and the Irish scollop thatcher uses the same tools as his English counterpart. For example, the technique of scollop thatching in Kent, described by Hennell,[3] appears to be basically the same as that illustrated in Fig. 3 from Co. Down. Scollop thatching is also widely practised on the continent of Europe,[4] and I have been informed that the techniques employed in north-west Germany, for example, are closely similar to those of north-east Ireland.[5] Thrust thatch, which Danachair records as being the dominant method used throughout most of Leinster,[6] and which also seems to have been known in northern Britain,[7] does not seem to be practised now in north-east Ireland. There is evidence to suggest that it was formerly used in south Armagh,[8] but I have been unable to find any examples of it among the few surviving thatched houses in that area.

By itself the distribution map of thatch types can provide little material for any detailed discussion of the ultimate origin of the several techniques and the cultural relationships which these may reflect. As has been stressed above, the thatched roof is an integral part of the traditional peasant house and any question of origins cannot therefore be treated completely *in vacuo*. Moreover, in the absence of adequate comparative material, which must be based on detailed regional surveys, any suggestions on these problems can only be regarded as extremely tentative.

To-day scollop thatching is by far the most common method employed in north-east Ireland, yet despite its widespread distribution its close affinity with English and continental thatching suggests that this technique

[1] Dean Aldrich, cited in *Elements of Civil Architecture* (3rd edition, 1824), p. 86.
[2] Peate, Iorwerth C.: *The Welsh House* (3rd edition, Liverpool, 1946), pp. 178–9.
[3] Hennell, Thomas: *The Countryman at Work*, p. 69.   [4] Campbell, Åke: *op. cit.*, p. 228.
[5] Information from Dr. Hartwig, Bielefeld, Hanover.   [6] Danachair, C. Ó: *op. cit.*, p. 213.
[7] Innocent, C. F.: *op. cit.*, p. 201.   [8] Irish Folk-lore Commission MS. 1079, pp. 219–21.

has been introduced to the area at a relatively late date. It is certainly true that the best examples of scollop thatching are to be found in those areas of Down and Antrim which were most intensively settled by the English colonists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Elsewhere, particularly in the more isolated upland regions of the west, the standards of craftsmanship are much less exacting, and the inferior method which used exposed scollops is found much more frequently. In this connection the restricted distribution of the other main techniques and their confinement to the peripheral coastal areas is perhaps significant. Roped thatch is inferior to scollop in that it is less durable and requires to be renewed more frequently. At the same time, it is better adapted to withstand a harsh climate than any other method of thatching, and its resistance to gale-force winds must be an important factor in its survival along the exposed coastlands. Its existence in these areas to-day may reflect an adaptation to the requirements of this particular environment, but it is significant that these areas in Ireland as a whole have tended to preserve longer the traditional peasant way of life. Roped thatch requires that communal labour which was an essential feature of traditional life and work, and which was especially important in house construction. It was also the method most commonly employed in thatching the summer dwellings, or 'booleys',[1] used in the pastoral transhumance of earlier days. Since it is simple to construct and quickly renewed it was well adapted to the political uncertainty of Irish social life during historic times. The more elaborate scollop technique provides a more durable roof, but this consideration must frequently have been of minor importance in Irish rural housing prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Roped thatch is also still widely used throughout the country to-day, both on humble office-houses and on corn ricks. This would perhaps suggest a more extensive distribution in the past, and when the other factors are taken into consideration, it seems probable that roped thatch may well have been the earliest method of thatching used in Ireland. In most areas the introduction of a superior technique and later the coming of a more settled social life may have led to its gradual replacement, and it has survived to-day only in those areas to which it is climatically best suited. Stapple thatch may also be an indigenous method which was formerly more widely practised, although its restricted distribution makes it impossible to draw any firm conclusions. Its closest parallels may perhaps be found in thatching methods used in mediaeval England, but the evidence for this is by no means satisfactory. Yet the fact that it is so closely confined to the Lecale peninsula, a region which formed the centre of Anglo-Norman influence in mediaeval Ulster

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[1] Graham, J. M.: *Transhumance in Ireland* (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Queen's University, Belfast, 1954), Chapter III, especially p. 38.

and which had close ties with northern England throughout this period, suggests it may have been introduced here by English craftsmen. It is also significant that the technique is known in this area as 'English thatching'.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

New Books

In this deeply interesting book the author has tried to record the old rural community as it existed until recently in the east Suffolk parish of Blaxhall. The method adopted by him was to record the memories of a number of old people in the parish of their own personal experience together with what they had heard from their parents and grandparents. The material thus obtained has been allowed to dominate the book and to give it its direction. This has resulted in a peculiarly authentic record. Any countryman over fifty who reads it will recognize its truth and will be prompted to recall, more vividly than he could have thought possible, 'the fellows who cut the hay' in the parish of his own childhood. This, although his own parish may have been quite unlike Blaxhall.

The book is divided into seven sections each based upon the personal and family memories of one or two people. Together they present the reader with rich and vivid pictures of the agricultural life of the district during the past century. Shepherds and shepherding as they were up until the First World War, together with the shepherds' dress and gear, are first described in fascinating detail. Other sections deal in like manner with many other aspects of farming as it used to be. The account given of harvesting and its associated customs is particularly good. The part played by the farm-worker's wife in helping to provide those staple articles of diet, bread, beer and bacon, is not forgotten. Baking in the old brick oven, the making of home-brewed, the curing of bacon and ham—each of these wellnigh forgotten operations is adequately recorded. Other parts of the book deal with the parish church, with bell-ringing, with the school and village inn, with smuggling and with folk lore.

Altogether, in this beautifully produced book, Mr. Evans has given us a satisfyingly complete account of an English village community as it was until a generation or so ago. However strong the temptation to do so, he has not painted too rosy a picture of that community, but has allowed us to catch more than a glimpse of the great poverty that existed there. It is well to be reminded that twists of wool from around a shepherd's

shears were valuable enough for his wife to wash and save up, that gleaning meant more bread on the table, and that poaching and smuggling, dangerous undertakings then, could hardly be avoided by a man with a family to support.

<div align="right">F. G. PAYNE.</div>

The 'Committee on Ulster Folklife and Traditions' has begun the work of collecting and recording the oral traditions of the counties of northern Ireland. As 'the main medium through which the Committee's work is made known to a wider public', the committee publishes yearly *Ulster Folklife*, of which our contributor, Mr. R. H. Buchanan, is honorary editor. The annual subscription is five shillings and sixpence (to the Hon. Sec., Bryson House, 28 Redford Street, Belfast). Volume 2 (1956) contains nine articles, notes and reviews. G. B. Adams writes on 'Patterns of Word Distribution', Dr. Estyn Evans on 'Fields, Fences and Gates', C. Ó Danachair on 'Three House Types', Dr. D. McCourt on 'The Outshot House-type and its distribution in Co. Londonderry'. GWERIN wishes *Ulster Folklife* every success.

The *Journal of the English Folk Dance and Song Society*, of which the 1956 issue has recently appeared, is a continuation of the *Journal of the Folk Song Society* and is published annually for members of the society (Cecil Sharp House, 2 Regent's Park Road, London, N.W.1). The present issue (Vol. VIII, No. 1) contains ballads and songs recorded in Ireland, 'The Greatham Sword Dance' by N. Peacock, a 'Sketch for a History of the Scottish Ballad' by William Montgomerie and a notable contribution by the late 'Jinkey' Wells, together with notes, reviews, etc. The 'frontispiece' (in the copy sent for review) although described as 'William Wells of Bampton' is a blank page! This issue of the *Journal* should be of the greatest interest to readers of GWERIN.

<div align="right">I. C. P.</div>

Some reviews have been held over until the next issue through lack of space.—*Ed*.

GWERIN

EDITORIAL NOTES

FOLK-LIFE studies in Europe, and particularly in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, have suffered a grievous loss through the untimely death of Professor Åke Campbell of Uppsala. He was an inspiration to all who knew him—gay, gallant, friendly and enthusiastic. His work in Ireland is well-known to all readers of *Folk-Liv*: the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh owes much to his vision and good counsel. Those of us who were at Stornoway and Oban in 1953 will remember his contributions to the Conference held there, and will recall his enthusiasm for the founding of Gwerin. He came to Wales in 1934 (with two dear friends, Professor Séamus Ó Duilearga and the late C. W. von Sydow): that visit gave a clear direction to folk studies in Wales and in all subsequent developments, Åke's advice was constantly sought and freely given.

For the last twenty years and more, Uppsala became almost the unofficial capital for folk studies and, from time to time, workers from all the countries which Gwerin represents made pilgrimage there, to learn under the guidance of Åke and his friend and colleague, Professor Dag Strömbäck, and to be inspired by their zeal and their capacity for hard work.

When I visited Åke at his home last July, I was grieved to see the change in him. But his enthusiasm was undiminished. He talked of plans and developments which he had in mind, if, as he sadly put it, 'I am not called away'. He even insisted on dragging himself to show Stewart Sanderson and myself the realization of one of his cherished dreams, the creation of the Uppsala Museum on the site of the old mill in the city. That afternoon, looking through his visitors' book, I realized once more how his influence, his kindly humanity and his selfless devotion to his ideals must live in the hearts and in the labours of the countless individuals from many nations whose names were entered in 'his book'.

*   *   *

One of Åke Campbell's last public acts was to support vigorously the proposal made by the School of Scottish Studies to record and examine the cultural heritage of South Uist.

Readers will recall that the British Government decided to build a guided missiles range in South Uist, with other installations in North Uist and Benbecula. When the plans were announced the Committee of the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh felt that the coming of 3,000 Servicemen to the island was bound to make a violent impact on its traditions and culture. The Committee therefore decided to ask the Secretary of State for Scotland to provide an emergency grant to enable steps to be taken at once to record and examine the traditional life and culture of South Uist while the material was still available.

This request was reasonable. It was not a request to the Government to abandon the project (though some of us would argue vigorously towards that end): it was a request *by the most qualified body in the country* to be allowed to put on record the evidence of a culture before it was destroyed. The Secretary of State summarily rejected it, and made it plain that he did not think that the introduction of thousands of Servicemen would have any marked effect on the traditions of a small, secluded community!

On the 7th March this year a letter was sent in the name of the Committee to a number of European and other experts inviting them to state their views on the question of the speed with which traditions might be expected to disappear and cultural patterns altered. The replies confirmed the Committee's worst fears. Here I may say that the introduction of ranges into certain parts of rural Wales has completely destroyed the cultural patterns of those areas. The monoglot community of Mynydd Epynt has disappeared, and the cultural pattern of the area impinging upon it radically altered, in less than fifteen years. Other examples could readily be cited.

One of the scholars who received this letter was Professor Magne Oftedal who holds the chair of Celtic Languages in the University of Oslo. His reply was eventually published in a Scottish newspaper. GWERIN is an international journal intended to promote the study of folk life, and it is our duty (and our privilege) to bring parts of this letter to the notice of our readers.

*   *   *

Professor Oftedal writes:

The Outer Hebrides are, as everyone admits, the most important repository of Gaelic language and culture in Scotland, and the area where Scottish Gaelic, under normal conditions, would have the best chances of surviving for a few more generations. Gaelic is still the every-day language of practically the whole population, except for the town of Stornoway, where English has a strong position, although Gaelic is understood by most of the native inhabitants at least to a certain degree.

*   *   *

Professor Oftedal continues:

You inform me that the Secretary of State for Scotland rejected your request for financial aid to record and study the traditions of the Uists and Benbecula on the grounds that he did not agree that the introduction of Servicemen would have any marked effect on the traditions of the community. This, in my opinion, is a totally irresponsible attitude for a representative of the British Government to take. . . .

I wish to voice the opinion that the Uist plans, if carried through, will be regarded by future generations *as an act of barbarism and a crime against the loyal and industrious population of the Outer Hebrides,* who will be deprived of their cultural heritage, lose the assurance and feeling of independence which it gave them, and, in very many cases, reduce them to half-cultured, rootless individuals.

This is a fair statement: some of us have seen, in the brief period of our own lives, the destruction, through similar causes, of several cultured communities and their replacement by groups of 'half-cultured, rootless individuals.'

*   *   *

Professor Oftedal took further action. He applied to his own University of Oslo for financial aid to carry out a study of place-names in South Uist before they were obliterated by the new plague and before security regulations made it difficult. The University promptly agreed, and the Professor has now returned to Norway with his data and his recordings.

*   *   *

It is a sad reflection on our present life in Britain that a Norwegian University should have to finance research work in South Uist while the representative of the British Government in Scotland refused financial aid for such a purpose and rejected out of hand the considered conclusions of experts and scholars like Åke Campbell, Professor Oftedal, and many others.

Books received:

(1) *The Moot Hall, Elstow*: a Collection illustrating English Seventeenth-century Life and Traditions associated with the life of John Bunyan, 1628–88. Pp. 28, with plates. Price 1*s.* 6*d.* Bedfordshire County Council, 1952.

(2) *John Bunyan and the Civil War*. Pp. 19. Price 6*d.* Bedfordshire County Council, 1956.

(3) *Actes de la Conférence de Namur* (C.I.A.P., 1953). Pp. 134. Bruxelles, 1956.

(4) F. J. North: *The Stones of Llandaff Cathedral*. Pp. xvii, 122, with 21 plates and 10 figures. Price 15*s.* 0*d.* Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1957.

(5) *Scottish Studies*. Parts I, II, January and June 1957. Published for the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh.

(6) *Gwyddor Gwlad*. Part 3, October 1957. A Welsh Agricultural Journal. Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

The Cooper's Craft

J. Geraint Jenkins

A COOPER is a craftsman who makes and repairs wooden vessels, formed of staves and hoops. Unlike most other wood workers, the cooper works to no written measurements or patterns, and considerable craft instinct is required to make a barrel of a specified girth and capacity. One of the secrets of the cooper's trade consists of knowing the number and the dimensions of the staves required to make a vessel of a particular size, and in the accurate shaping of those staves to fit tightly against one another.

HISTORICAL SURVEY

The craft of coopering is of great antiquity; there are references to it in the Bible; it was known in Ancient Egypt, while Pliny the Elder (*circa* A.D. 79) ascribed the invention of the cask to the inhabitants of the Alpine Valleys. One writer says:[1] 'The wooden cask though known in Ancient Egypt was to the Roman world a gift of the northern peoples. Its manufacture in Europe dates from the late Bronze Age in Switzerland. Iron tools brought great proficiency in the art of cooperage. Good barrels built up from dowelled staves and strengthened with metal hoops penetrated southwards at the beginning of our era.' It is probable that during the Roman occupation the art of coopering was introduced into Britain. At the Borough of Reading Museum, for example, two large barrels excavated at Silchester are displayed. These, made of Pyrenean pine, were probably used for transporting wine from the Mediterranean region, and were later used as lining for the bottom of wells at Silchester.

Like so many other crafts, the art of barrel making disappeared with the departure of the Romans from Britain, but was re-introduced into the country by the Anglo Saxons. The growth of maritime trade and the development of overland transport led to a great demand for casks in the late Middle Ages, and the barrel was the standard package in all European countries. On board ships almost everything was stored in casks, and the

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[1] Forbes, R. J.: 'Food and Drink' in Singer, C., E. J. Holmyard, A. R. Hall and T. I. Williams (Editors), *History of Technology*, Vol. II, p. 136.

coopers, regarded as a hard swearing, hard drinking crowd, continued to be important members of ships' crews until the mid-nineteenth century. During the Napoleonic Wars, for example, ships trading between the Isle of Man and the West Indies were loaded with roughly shaped staves for the outward voyage. The ships' coopers made these staves into casks on the long voyage to Jamaica and the Barbados, and the casks that they made were filled with rum for the return voyage.

On land, too, master coopers were numerous, and they were engaged on a variety of tasks from making wash tubs to brewing vats. The earliest reference to a cooper's company was in 1298, when the coopers of the City of London were fined 'each according to his ability to the amount of thirty one shillings'. This reference to a collective fine suggests that these craftsmen were members of a company. There are other references to the existence of a cooper's company in the late Middle Ages, and on April 29, 1501, the company received its Charter of Incorporation. Of the fifty livery companies then existing 'The Master and Wardens of the Mystery of Coopers' ranked as thirty-seventh.

Before the late eighteenth century, brewers were not allowed to make casks on their own premises, but after that date when the influence of the cooper's company was waning, brewers were permitted to employ coopers. By the end of the nineteenth century master coopers were relatively few in number, and the majority of workshops were to be found in breweries. At the present day the number of craftsmen employed in barrel making is very small indeed, yet the craft remains one of the few where machine technique has not replaced the age-old hand methods.

THE CLASSES OF COOPERING.

There are three main categories of the craft: (1) Dry Coopering, (2) White Coopering, and (3) Wet Coopering.

(1) *Dry Coopering*

This is the least specialized category of the craft. The dry cooper is concerned with making barrels to hold non-liquid substances such as flour, tobacco, sugar and crockery. The staves themselves are less tightly held together than in wet coopering, and the finished barrels are far less bulged. A great variety of woods may be used, including fir, elm, spruce, poplar and beech, while the binding hoops are generally of ash or hazel. In this the least exacting branch of the craft, machinery replaced hand work at an early date. Both the staves and heads are cut into shape mechanically; they are then arranged inside a hoop until a complete circle is formed. They are steamed until pliable and a windlass is employed until the free ends are drawn together to the shape of a barrel. The barrel
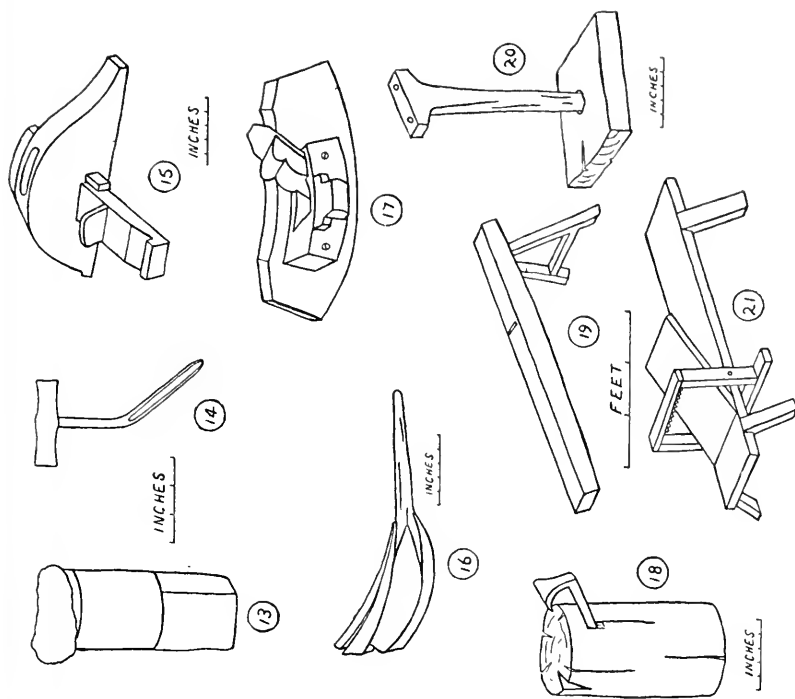
1. Broad axe.
2. Backing knife.
3. Hollowing knife.
4. Heading knife.
5. Flagging iron.
6. Adze.
7. Round shaves.

8. Taper auger.
9. Topping plane.
10. Jumper.
11. Cresset.
12. Downright shave.
13. Driver.
14. Thief.

15. Croze.
16. Chime mawl.
17. Chiv.
18. Cooper's block.
19. Long jointer plane.
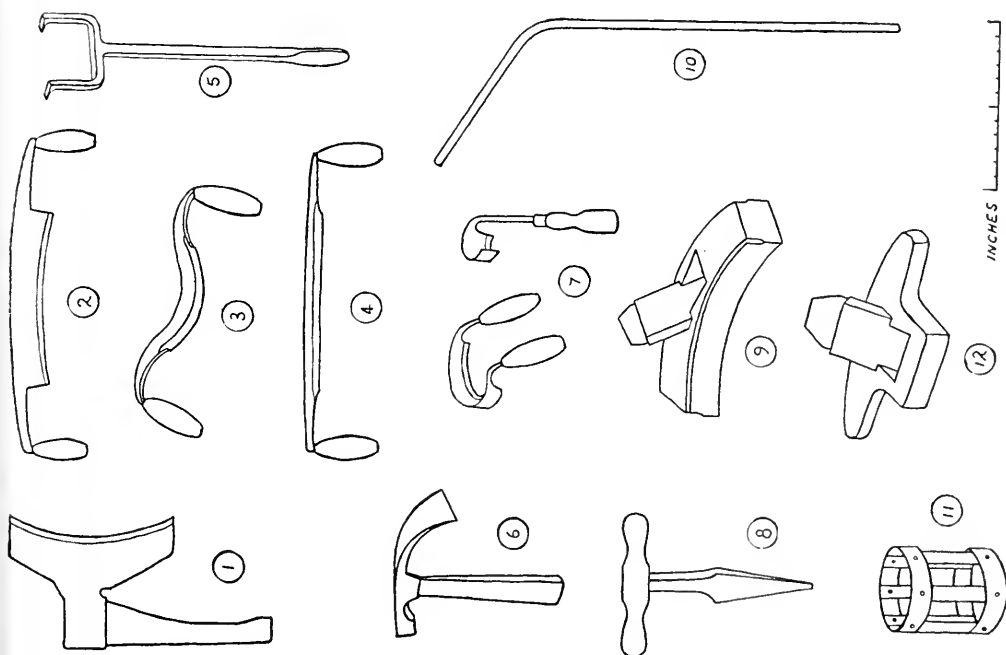20. Bick iron.
21. Shaving horse.

Fig. 1

is then steamed to set the staves into the typical barrel shape, and is shaved and trimmed with a variety of knives and shaves. If the barrel is required to hold a powdered product such as gun powder, the staves are tongued and grooved into one another to provide a tight joint. This category is known as dry-tight coopering, and is regarded as more exacting than dry coopering, but less so than wet coopering.

(2) *White Coopering*

The white cooper was engaged in making pails, butter churns, wash tubs and a variety of other utensils for dairy and household use. The craft of white coopering disappeared almost completely in the late nineteenth century due to the falling off of demand for coopered utensils. Although the white cooper was mainly concerned with making coopered utensils, he also made a great variety of other products. One craftsman in the rural locality of Penbryn, south Cardiganshire, in the late nineteenth century, for example, made the following goods for household and farm use: Hay rakes, wooden shovels, ladles, spoons, butter prints, butter scales, butter churns, wash tubs, meat salting tubs, cheese moulds, turned bowls, buckets.

In making such a wide range of products, a great variety of woods was, of course, used; sycamore being the most important in the making of dairy utensils. The process of manufacturing a tub or bucket is substantially the same as in wet coopering. This will be described later.

(3) *Wet Coopering*

The wet cooper is concerned with making barrels to hold liquids, and the work he performs is very careful and exacting. Not only must the staves fit exactly together, so that the cask is watertight, but it must also hold the exact intended contents of liquid. In the trade the following terms are used for the various sizes of cask:

BEER			SPIRITS		
Butt	.	. 108 gallons	Butt	.	. 108–120 gallons
Hogshead	.	54 gallons	Port Pipe	.	. 108–112 gallons
Barrel .	.	36 gallons	Puncheon	.	. 80–100 gallons
Kilderkin	.	18 gallons	Hogshead	.	. 48– 56 gallons
Firkin .	.	9 gallons	Quarter	.	. 26– 32 gallons
Pin	.	. 4½ gallons	Octaves	.	. 20 gallons
			Kegs	.	. Below 15 gallons

Materials

The only timber used in wet coopering is oak. For spirits, American oak is preferred; for wine, oak grown south of latitude 50° is preferred, while for beer and ale, oak grown north of latitude 50° is used. In Britain, very little native oak is used to-day, and the main sources of supply are

Germany, Russia and Persia. Different qualities of wood are required for different classes of work. For example, porosity is essential in some wine casks to allow for the passage of air through the wood to assist fermentation. For spirits the wall of the cask must be so tight that neither water nor alcohol can escape, and for this reason staves cleft along the radius of a tree trunk are used, the natural concentric rings of the tree making the barrel perfectly tight.

THE PROCESS OF MAKING A CASK

The manufacture of a tight barrel starts in the woods where oak trees averaging two hundred years old, are selected and felled. These are cut with cross-cut saws to roughly the lengths required for staves. The logs are then quartered with beetle and wedge and further broken down to the required shape with a long handled fromard. They are then shaped roughly with a draw knife, and cut to the exact length of the required stave.

The rough staves are then thoroughly dried by piling in the open for a length of time, which varies according to moisture and temperature conditions. So far, preparing the staves has been the province of the woodland worker, and it is not until the rough staves are dried down to a uniform moisture content that they are taken to the cooper's workshop.

The processes involved in the manufacture of a tight cask may be divided into the following stages:

Stage 1. Preparing the Staves

The staves are either placed in a shaving horse or clamped to a hook on the cooper's block and shaped with a series of draw knives. In a cask the staves are wider in the centre than at the top and bottom and the required taper is obtained with the broad-bladed side axe, followed by the straight-bladed draw knife.

The sides are then bevelled according to the radius of the cask on the long jointer plane.

Stage 2. Raising the Cask

The staves are arranged inside an iron raising hoop until a complete circle is formed. An ash truss hoop, again the product of woodland craftsmen, is driven down temporarily to hold the staves in place. The roughly assembled cask at this stage has the appearance of a truncated cone; the staves being held in place at the top by the iron raising hoop, and splaying outwards to be held in place at a lower level by the ash truss hoop. The cask is now said to be raised.

Stage 3. Trussing up

This is probably the most complicated of all the stages, since the straight staves have to be bent to the typical barrel shape. In the larger workshops it is placed in the steaming chest for some twenty minutes at a temperature of approximately 200° F. The more usual method, however, is to moisten the staves with water and place the cask over a fire of wood shavings. This softens the fibres of the wood and enables the staves to bend. The cooper and his assistant each armed with a heavy hammer go round and round the barrel, beating consecutively smaller ash truss hoops into place until the splayed staves are drawn closely together. Since the staves used in making wine casks are thinner than those used in beer casks, a slightly different method of trussing up is employed. In this case the staves of pliable Mediterranean oak are drawn together by a rope and tackle known as a Dutch hand or Spanish windlass, which is passed round the stave ends.

Stage 4. Firing

The cask is again placed over a small fire and kept there to set for some fifteen minutes. The moisture absorbed in trussing is now dried out, the fibres of the wood shrink so that the strain placed on the staves in bending is greatly reduced. After firing the staves are rigidly set, so that when the truss hoops are removed, there is no tendency for the staves to spring out of position.

Stage 5. Topping

The cooper first of all trims the top of the cask with an adze in order to form what is known as a chime or bevel. The stave ends are then levelled with the semi-circular sun or topping plane. Some two inches below the edge, a broad but shallow channel is cut with a special type of plane called a chiv. A deeper and narrower groove into which the cask head fits is then cut with the narrow-bladed croze.

Stage 6. Cleaning down

Since the staves are now well set, all the truss hoops, with the exception of the two iron end hoops are removed to provide a clear surface for the various shaves used in cleaning and smoothing the cask. Both the inside and outside of the vessel are cleaned by a number of small shaves, all resembling the carpenter's spoke shave.

Stage 7. Bunging

Before the heads are fitted, the bung-hole is bored with a conical auger and afterwards smoothed with a burning iron.

Stage 8. Heading

The head of a barrel consists of three or more pieces of oak held together by dowel pegs and caulked with dry rush placed in between the

I

II

III

IV

PLATE   I. Preparing the staves. The stave is held in the hook on the splitting-out block and the inside prepared with a hollowing knife.

PLATE   II. The raised cask, with raising hoop and one wooden truss hoop in place.

PLATE III. Trussing up. A series of truss hoops are driven on. The cresset fire can be seen in the foreground.

PLATE IV. Cresset fire is being fed. Inset sticks help the drawing.

joints. To obtain the approximate radius of the head, the craftsman adopts a trial and error system of stepping the compass around the top of the cask, until the distance between the compass points is one-sixth the diameter of the cask top. This gives the radius of the head. After shaping, the head is inserted in the cask, the end hoop having been first removed.

Stage 9. Hooping

The iron hoops are cut, beaten into shape and riveted on the T-anvil or bick iron. They are then driven into place with a hammer and iron tipped, wedge shaped driver.

The cask is then stamped, checked to see whether it is completely water-tight, so that it must be able to bear pressure of up to forty pounds per square inch, and also checked so that it will hold the correct volume of liquid.

THE COOPER'S TOOLS[1]

(A) STAVE SHAPING TOOLS

Broad Axe

The broad axe has a blade as long as twelve inches, which is set at a slight angle to the handle to facilitate the downward chopping of the staves. It is a side axe, that is the blade is sharpened on one side only, and having no poll it cannot be used for hammering. It is used by the cooper for two distinct operations. Firstly, it is used for splitting the staves and shaping them ready for bevelling on the jointer plane. Secondly, the broad axe is used for the rough shaping of the head. The head is rested on the splitting block, being supported by the craftsman's body and left hand. The head is then shaped with the axe held well up the haft with the right hand.

Draw Knife

The straight-bladed two-handled draw knife is used after the broad axe for smoothing the staves, prior to bevelling.

Backing Knife

The backing knife is a two-handled draw knife with a slightly concave blade for shaping the back of the staves; that is the outer surface of the cask.

Hollowing Knife

This is similar to the backing knife except that the blade is convex. It is used to shape the inside of the staves, while each stave is either held in the shaving horse or in the hook on the cooper's block.

[1] Examples of all these tools are preserved at the Museum of English Rural Life, University of Reading.

Cooper's Block

This is a heavy log some two feet high and one foot in diameter on which the staves are split. A hook is fitted to the top of this block, and the staves for the larger casks are held in this hook while they are being shaped with draw knives.

Shaving Horse

This is used for shaping all staves designed for casks of less than nine gallons capacity. The workman sits astride the horse, the stave being clamped on the sloping table in front of him. The pressure on the clamped stave is regulated by the feet, leaving the craftsman's hands free to shape the stave with the various draw knives.

Jointer Plane

This very long plane, with a stock as long as six feet, is used to bevel the edge of each stave, so that they fit together exactly when the cask is raised. The jointer is the largest of all planes, but, unlike all others, it is used upside down, and remains stationary in the planing process. It stands on a pair of straight legs some two feet high, which are socketed loosely into a mortice in one end of the plane. This elevates the plane towards the craftsman and enables him to smooth each stave end as he slides it downwards over the blade.

(B) TRUSSING TOOLS

Truss Hoops

These wooden truss hoops of various sizes are made of ash, and are produced by woodland craftsmen. In trussing, a thick iron raising hoop is also used.

Hammer

The type of hammer used by coopers is a short-handled four or five pound sledge hammer.

Cresset

This is a small iron grate no more than twelve inches high and eight inches in diameter, in which a fire of wood shavings is lit. It is generally made up of pieces of old hoop iron. It is used in the trussing process, the staves having been first moistened, and is also used for setting the staves of the completed cask.

(C) TOPPING TOOLS

Adze

Coopers' adzes differ from carpenters' adzes in that their blades are far more curved. Their cutting edges are generally sharpened on the inside

only, while the handle is no more than nine inches long. The short handle is necessary so that the craftsman can swing the tool with the radius of the cask.

The adze is used to shape the end of the cask on the chime, to produce a flat surface for the croze to run in.

Topping Plane

The topping or sun plane is used to finish off the stave ends. This provides a level surface on which the fence of the chiv and croze will travel when the groove is cut. In its mechanism the tool is similar to the carpenter's trying plane, possessing a flat blade and central shavings discharge. It differs, however, in that the stock is semi-circular, in order to conquer the narrow circular margin of the stave ends.

Chiv

This is a convex-bladed tool and is used for cutting a broad but shallow channel—the howel—some two inches below the top of the staves. It provides a bed for the groove which will be cut with the croze at a later stage. In general appearance the croze and chiv are similar, except that the convex blade of the chiv is some two inches wide while that of the croze is no more than half an inch in width.

Before the introduction of the chiv, and also in cases where the cooper does not possess the right size for a particular barrel, the channel is cut with a hollow-bladed howel adze.

For repair work the channel is cut with a curved, hollow-bladed knife known as a jigger.

Croze

The groove for the head is cut with the croze, a tool which is similar in general outline to the chiv. It differs from the chiv in that it has a very narrow blade, which may be a simple router (hawksbill) or of the saw-tooth type. The most common type of croze consists of a square wooden peg which carries the blade, connected to a large semi-circular wooden fence. The fence, which guides the blade in its channel is placed horizontally on the cask rim, and the blade set at the required distance below it. As the instrument is pushed around the inside of the cask, the circular groove to receive the head is cut.

(D) CLEANING TOOLS

Downright Shave

This is the cooper's form of carpenters' spoke shave used to clean and smooth the outside of the cask. All the truss hoops are removed, and the shave is used by pushing it downwards, away from the craftsman. The

blade, which is generally about three inches wide has a slightly concave edge to allow for the curvature of the cask.

Buzz

After the outside of the cask has been cleaned with the downright shave, a small scraper shave called a buzz is used to finish off. The blade of this tool is almost at right angles to the stock.

Inside Shave

For smoothing the inside surface of the cask, a tool similar in shape to the downright shave is used. In this case, however, it has a slightly convex blade.

Round Shaves

A series of single or double-handled round shaves are used for smoothing the joints inside the cask. By pulling the tool along the joints, the craftsman smooths away any roughness on the inside of the cask.

(E) BUNGING TOOLS

Taper Auger

This is used for boring the bung-hole in the cask. It consists of a tapering blade set at right angles to a wooden handle. Where necessary the hole is smoothed afterwards with a burning iron, a tool similar in shape to a soldering iron.

Thief

This is a small knife, similar in shape to a gimlet, but with a sharp edge almost at right angles to the shank of the tool. It is used for paring away the jagged ends on the inside of the bung-hole.

(F) HEADING TOOLS

Brace and Bit

The large cooper's brace with a fixed spoon bit of small diameter is used to bore the dowel holes in the various sections of the head.

Compasses

To obtain the radius of the head, the cooper steps the compasses around the croze mark at the top of the cask, until the distance between the compass points is equal to one sixth of the diameter of the cask. This gives the radius of the head.

Heading Knife

After shaping with the side axe, the head is bevelled along the sides with a bowed draw knife, called a heading knife. This differs from the ordinary draw knife in that the blade is much thinner, and is distinctly bow shaped.

Heading Swift

This is a heavy shave, similar in general shape to the downright shave, used for the final smoothing of the head. It has a two and a half inch cutting iron, and the head is planed against the grain.

Chincing Iron

This is used to push in the dried rushes or flags into the joints between the separate sections of the head and between the head and the croze cut. The chincing iron is a small chisel, no more than two inches wide, which is often made of old hoop iron.

Jumper

This is a steel or iron bar about three-quarters of an inch in diameter, which is bent at one end. It is used to lever heads into position, and by pushing it through the bung-hole it is used to lever the head if it falls below the level of the croze channel.

Flagging Iron

In repair work and occasionally in making new casks, rushes are inserted between the staves. A fork-like tool called a flagging iron, is used to twist each stave in turn to open the joint sufficiently for the insertion of rushes.

(G) HOOPING TOOLS

Bick Iron

This is the tall but narrow cooper's T-anvil known also as a beak iron or cooper's strake. At each extremity of the T, a hole is drilled, where the rivets are beaten into the hoop as it rests on it. The hoop cutting chisel, similar to a blacksmith's hardy, can also be stuck into one of these holes.

Driver

The driver or drift is made of steel and is fitted with an oak handle. The narrow end is grooved to prevent the driver from slipping off the hoop. Its main use is in driving the iron hoops into place on the cask, and due to constant hammering, the wooden handle has to be replaced at frequent intervals. A driver generally measures some six inches in length, while the steel edge is some three inches wide.

Chime Mawl

This is a piece of wood, some two feet long, used to beat down the end hoops of the cask.

APPRENTICESHIP

Many of the medieval trade gilds practised some form of initiation ceremony, which had to be undergone by apprentices at the end of their time. In coopering, the traditional ceremony is still performed, whenever

a craftsman ends his five-year apprenticeship. I recently witnessed this ceremony in a Reading brewery. The apprentice first of all makes a headless fifty-four gallon hogshead, as evidence that he is a qualified craftsman. With due ceremony this is rolled to the centre of the workshop, the apprentice is grabbed by a number of colleagues and lowered into the cask. Wooden truss hoops are then beaten on, followed by a red-hot iron end hoop. Soot, flour, wood shavings, water and beer are poured into the cask, and on the apprentice as he squats at the bottom. The cask is turned on its side and, with the apprentice still inside, is rolled three times round the workshop floor. The young craftsman then emerges to receive his indentures from his master. Undoubtedly this ceremony is a survival from medieval times, for the ordinances of the cooper's company suggest that some form of ceremony had to be undergone by apprentices, before the wardens of the company presented them to the Chamberlain of the City of London, as fit and proper persons, qualified to take up their freedom.

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Two Hebridean Corn-kilns

Ian Whitaker

IN countries with such an undependable climate as Scotland, the kiln provided an economically important method of drying corn, either prior to threshing or before grinding. It is probable that drying before threshing only occurred in regions on the northern periphery of corn cultivation, where climatic conditions preclude the ripening of grain, which as a result is still not hardened when required for threshing.[1] More frequently, however, the kiln was used for preparing corn for milling, and it would be stacked damp until it was needed for grinding. In Scotland in the past corn was generally milled as required in small quantities, and consequently the kiln would be in frequent use during the winter.

In the Highlands in the eighteenth century the commonest method of preparing grain for milling—the quern was of course in general use—was by *graddaning* or parching by burning the straw. Pennant recorded two different methods of graddaning in Rum, which he visited in 1772: the ears of corn would be cut off and dried in a kiln, after which they would be placed on the floor and set alight, the grain afterwards being picked out 'now as black as coal'. Alternatively the whole sheaf might be burnt without the trouble of cutting off the ears, an extremely wasteful method since the straw was then lost for thatching or manure.[2] Johnson, who reported the practice from Skye in the following year, pointed out that when the straw was burnt the cattle were being deprived of potential fodder.[3] Although Martin reported in 1703 that the technique was becoming obsolete in the Islands,[4] it seems to have been in use as far south as Dunsinnan in Perthshire some seventy years later.[5] One reason for this survival must have been the unusual taste of graddaned bread, which made it so highly esteemed.[6] This distinctive taste was retained, however, in other methods in use in the nineteenth century. Thus the ears of bere were plucked and placed in a net (*tarran*) made of the tough roots of the yellow bedstraw or of bent-grass, and hung over a slow smokeless fire. The ears would be periodically turned until quite dry.[7] Rye and oats, on

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[1] Scott, 1951, pp. 196–7.
[2] Pennant, 1790, Vol. I, pp. 322–5; cf. Buchanan, 1793, p. 103.
[3] Johnson, 1930, p. 72.
[4] Martin, 1703, p. 204.
[5] Pennant, 1790, Vol. II, p. 179.
[6] Boswell, 1936, p. 134.
[7] Carmichael, 1928–54, Vol. I, p. 250.

the other hand, were dried in a pot over the fire.[1] It was important that the flame of the fire should not be too high—hence the meaning of the chant collected by Carmichael in Barra, 'Beannachadh fuiriridh':

Glasair leith, chaol, chrom,	Thou flame grey, slender, curved,
Tighinn a toll mhullach nam fod,	Coming from the top pore of the peat,
A lasair leumrach, leathann, theith,	Thou flame of leaps, breadth, heat,
Na teid le do chleid da m' choir.	Come not nigh me with thy quips.
Gabhail reidh, sheimh, shuairce,	A burning steady, gentle, generous,
Tighinn mu 'n cuart mo thetheann,	Coming round about my quicken roots,
Teine cubhr, caon, cuana,	A fire fragrant, fair and peaceful,
Nach dean smur, no smuar, no reubann.	Nor causes dust, nor grief, nor havoc.[2]

Another method of parching (*fuirireadh*) was to place the damp grain in straw tubs together with heated stones. This latter method, as well as parching in a pot, is reported from St. Kilda and from Shetland in the second half of the nineteenth century.[3] Such parched meal (Gaelic *mìn fhuiriridh*, Shetland *burstin*) was particularly popular for baking cakes used at Christmas and other festivals.[4]

Corn dried by any of these methods had to be beaten to remove the husk. To prevent bruising this would often be done by women in their bare feet, a usage mentioned in another song:

Ta chuile te cho togarrach	Each damsel is so blithly
'S i bogadh ris na beiririch,	Bowing to the 'beirirch',
'S gun dannsadh i cho sodanach,	And she would dance as lightly
'S ge d' bhiodh i pronnadh eiririch.	As if tramping parched corn.[5]

The kiln, however, seems to have been the commonest method of drying corn in those parts of the British Isles where grain might have to be reaped damp. Although the T-shaped Romano-British corn-ovens have

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[1] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 251. The curious kiln described by Boswell when at Screapadal (Beinn a Chapuill), Raasay, was clearly evolved from the use of a pot:

I saw in this hut a little house-kiln for drying corn. It was about the size of a hogshead; was made of wattles plastered with clay very firmly both on the outside and the inside. The convenience of it was that the man could dry a little at a time, as he could afford it, and instead of having one to attend to in an outhouse, it could be watched by the family sitting by their fireside.—Boswell, 1936, p. 138.

[2] Carmichael, 1928–54, Vol. I, pp. 250–1.

[3] Mitchell, 1880, p. 46; Sands, 1877, p. 190, 1878, p. 99; they had one common kiln in St. Kilda in 1697, however—Martin, 1698, p. 102—but cf. Buchan, 1818, p. 26, writing in 1773. The kiln was out of use by 1829—Mackenzie, 1911, p. 9.

[4] Carmichael, 1928–54, Vol. II, p. 279.

[5] *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 279; the novel methods which with other miraculous powers were attributed to Mackay of the Rinns of Islay in the following 'Craobh nan Ubhal' are of interest in this connection:

S e Mac Aoidh an duine buadhmhor,	An ingenious man is Mackay,
Nì e an cruadhchadh gun chonnadh,	He can dry grain without fuel,
's ann l'a dhuirn a nì e phronnadh.	It is with his fists he bruises it.

And in another version:

'S e Mac Aoidh an duine buadhar,	An ingenious man is Mackay,
Nì e an cruadhchadh gun chonnadh,	He can dry grain without fuel,
'S ann le chasan nì e chalgadh [?]	With his feet he removes the awns,
'S ann le fearg a nì e phronnadh.	And with anger he bruises it.

—*Ibid.*, Vol. V, pp. 4–5, 6–7.

CORN KILN: PENINERINE,
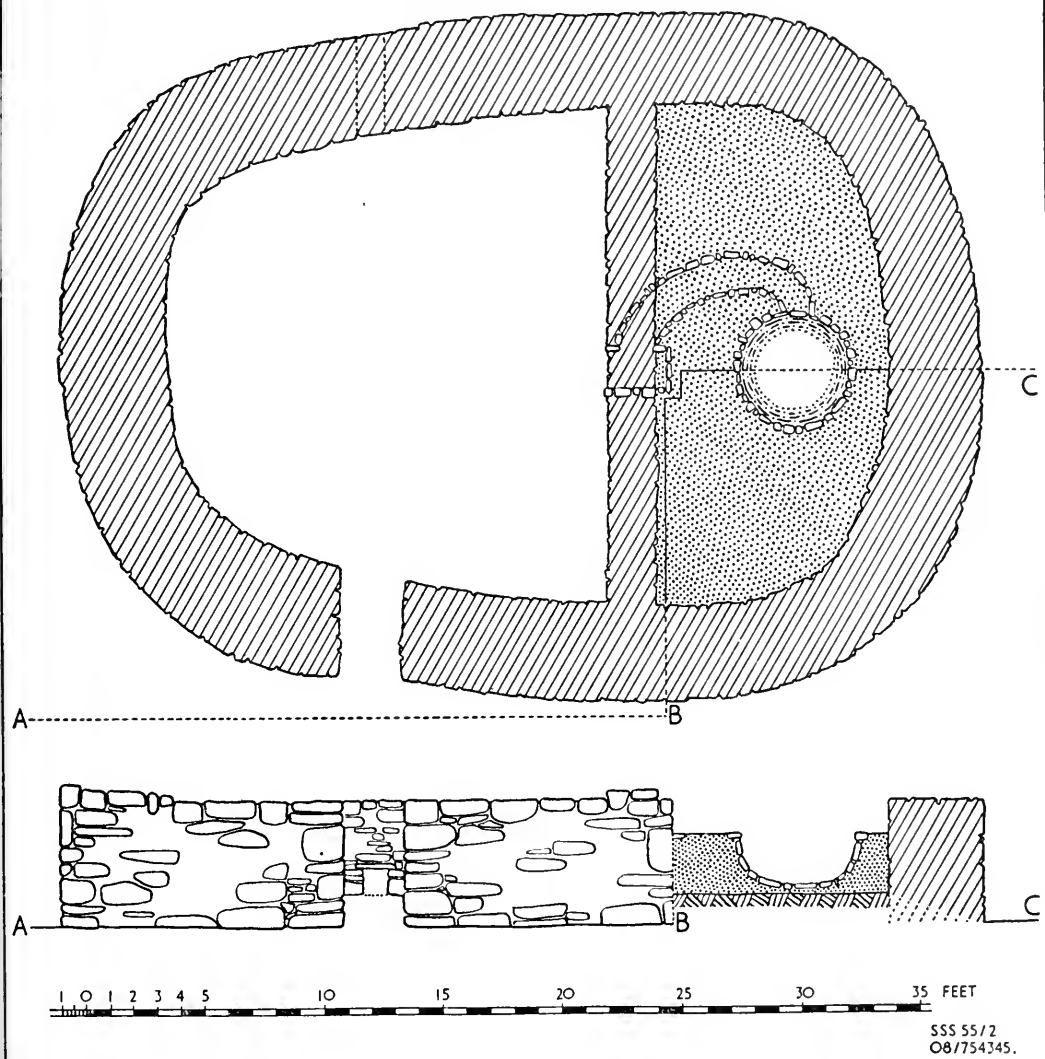PARISH OF SOUTH UIST, INVERNESS-SHIRE.

Fig. 1. Corn-kiln (*sòrn*), South Uist

received most attention,[1] there are interesting parallels between the kilns of the prehistoric Iron Age culture of South Britain, and Hebridean kilns of the last 200 years.[2] I shall here discuss this Hebridean type, which seems to have been confined to the Gaidhealtachd in recent times.*
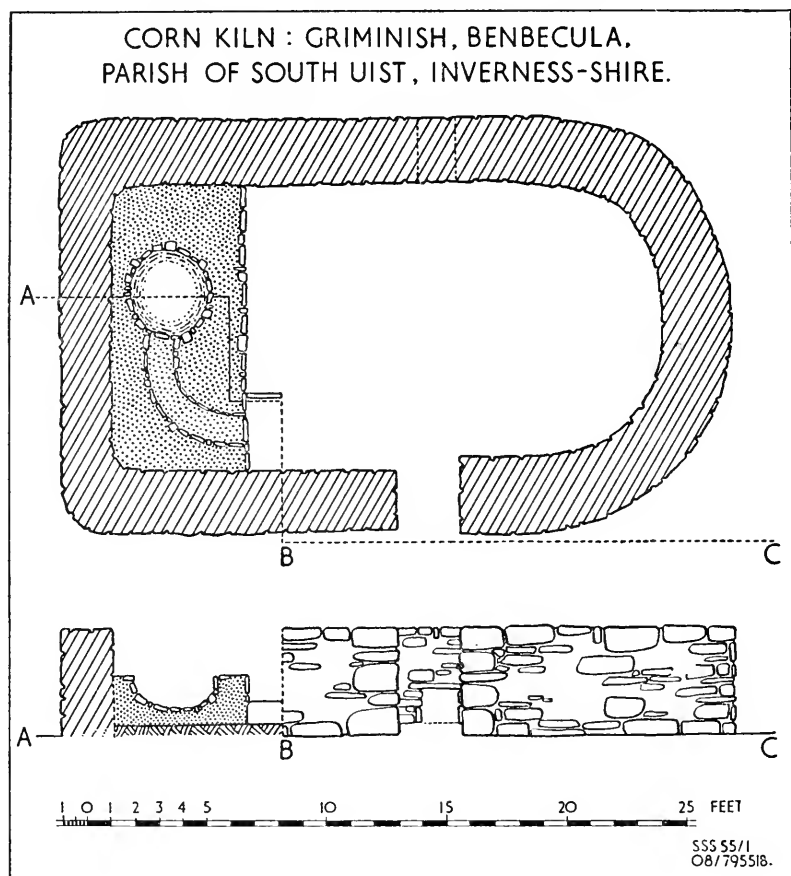

CORN KILN : GRIMINISH, BENBECULA.
PARISH OF SOUTH UIST, INVERNESS-SHIRE.

FIG. 2. CORN-KILN (*sòrn*), BENBECULA

The earliest reference to corn-kilns in Scotland in a literary source appears to be from Adamnan's *Vita Sancti Columbæ* (Liber I, cap. xxxv), where it is related that a cross was raised on the island of Hinba before the door of the kiln (*ante ianuam canabæ*) to mark the spot where the priest

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[1] e.g. Gowland, 1921; Goodchild, 1943.　　　　[2] Crawford, 1938.

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* The prehistoric Scottish material and some of the later examples from the eastern part of Scotland are discussed in a forthcoming article by Mr. R. W. Feachem, of the Royal Commission on Ancient Monuments. I hope myself to review the Orkney and Shetland kilns in a later note.

Ernanus died.[1] If we accept the evidence of other lives of Irish saints, it would appear that the *canaba* was a storehouse containing the kiln, rather than a kiln by itself.[2] Hinba was earlier equated with na h-Eilacha Naomha, one of the Garvellachs off Mull, but Watson rejected this theory on the grounds that this island contained no large bay or inlet as was elsewhere reported; according to him Hinba was more probably Jura.[3] Be this as it may, there is an interesting kiln on na h-Eilacha Naomha first noticed by T. S. Muir.[4] This kiln has internal measurements of 16 feet long by 10 feet wide, and has a raised platform at one end some 4 feet high, with a central pit and a straight flue. There were two entrances opposite each other.[5] It is not possible, however, to associate this kiln with either the hypothetical Columban colony or the even earlier occupation of the island by Brénainn mocu Alti [St. Brendan] mentioned in the *Vita prima Sancti Brendani*,[6] since it appears that a kiln was erected there by a former tenant of the island in the nineteenth century.[7]

I have examined two kilns on the islands of South Uist and Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides which are very similar to that on na h-Eilacha Naomha depicted by Muir (Figs. 1 and 2). The larger of these two structures is at Peninerine, South Uist,[8] and is somewhat ovalized in shape. The maximum internal length is $30\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and the width at the maximum point is 21 feet. The second kiln, at Griminish, Benbecula,[9] has maximum internal measurements of $22\frac{1}{2}$ by $11\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and has rather sharper corners at the kiln end. In both kilns there is only one entrance, with a vent (Gaelic *feadan a' chàthaidh*)[10] (Fig. 3 (E)) in the wall opposite; in this detail they differ from that on the Garvellachs. The raised platform (B) is termed *sòrn*, a term also applied to the whole structure, whilst the pit (G), not always situated quite centrally, is known as *sùil* or *sorag*. The pit was lined with horizontal

FIG. 3. KEY TO TERMIN-
OLOGY OF CORN-KILN.

courses of stones, whilst from the base a stone-lined flue (D), *cealach*, led to the fireplace at the edge of the *sòrn*. The draught was regulated
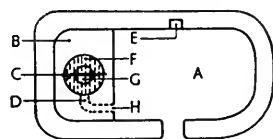
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[1] Adamnan, 1874, pp. 33, 143. [2] Scott, 1951, p. 204n. [3] Watson, 1926, pp. 81–2, 84.
[4] Muir, 1861, pp. 141–2.
[5] Miss Donaldson, who examined the same kiln about 1919 gives slightly different measurements: length 14 feet, width 8 feet, height of platform $3\frac{1}{4}$ feet—Donaldson, 1920, p. 450.
[6] In this life the island is generally known as 'Ailech', although in the two versions from the Rawlinson manuscripts in the Bodleian Library (Rawl. B. 485 and 505) published by Plummer, the form 'Auerech' is used.—Plummer, 1910, Vol. I, p. 143.   [7] Anderson, 1881, pp. 98n–99n.
[8] National grid reference 08/754345; SSS 55/2.   [9] 08/795518; SSS 55/1.
[10] I am indebted to my colleague, Calum Maclean, for obtaining the terminology of the corn-kiln from Donald Morrison and Donald MacKinnon, both of Gramsdale, Benbecula; the terminology in South Uist is almost identical—*brat* being preferred to *traghaid*—information from Donald John Macdonald, Peninerine, South Uist: MS. notebook 49, pp. 4615–16. It would appear that only the terms *brat, cealach, maide sùirn* and *sòrn* are listed in Dwelly, 1949.

at this point by a vertical flag. When in use a single beam (C), *maide sùirn*, or *druim sùirn*, would be placed across the pit, and over this a covering of sticks (F), *ciùthlein*, would be laid in the opposite direction. A layer of straw (Benbecula: *traghaid*, South Uist: *brat*), or, occasionally, a blanket, was laid over this, and finally the corn to be dried was placed on top. The floor of the structure (A), in both cases merely earthen, would be used for threshing, as is confirmed by the term *cùl a' bhualaidh*.*

This type of corn-kiln had neither window nor chimney, and would be roofed in the same way as a blackhouse, which has the same ovalized form. A rectangular kiln from Griminish, North Uist, with internal measurements of 19 by 11 feet, has been illustrated by Sir Lindsay Scott, and was dated by him to the nineteenth century.[1] Another, definitely oval in shape, with a single entrance in the short wall and a flue leading out into the barn, was found by R. B. K. Stevenson at South Galson, parish of Barvas, Lewis. This kiln has a rather more steeply-sided pit than the others which I have discussed.[2] Another corn-kiln of this type is reported to have been roofed and in use at Bragor in the same parish in 1939,[3] whilst Findlay reports that yet another was in service on the mainland near Gairloch in the first decade of this century.[4] One of the principal drawbacks to the kiln-type seems to have been that the grain frequently caught fire, so that the structure was generally some distance from the steading. There was also a tendency in the opposite direction for the kiln to become choked, as is mentioned by the eighteenth century North Uist bard, John MacCodrum, in his song 'Diomoladh Pìoba Dhomhnaill Bhàin':

Chan fhaigh a' chùis-bhùirt ud	That laughing stock will not get a hall
Talla 'm bi mùirn	wherein is merrymaking but a kiln choked
Ach àth air a mùchadh	up with straw cinders and soot.[5]
Le dùbhdan 's le sùidh;	

The distribution of this type of corn-kiln is still uncertain. It is not improbable that Robertson was referring to this category in 1799 when he wrote that the timber-ribbed kilns which were general in Perthshire some fifty years before, were still occasionally constructed.[6] Similarly the kiln at Dalwhinnie mentioned in the lament beginning ' 'S fhir nan sùl donna' relating to an incident which happened about 1765[7] may also have been cognate with these Hebridean kilns. A prolonged search during fieldwork in Badenoch in 1953 failed to provide any new evidence, however. We

[1] Scott, 1951, p. 200, and Fig. 4.   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 200 and Fig. 5.   [3] *Ibid.*, p. 200.
[4] Findlay, 1956, p. 170.   [5] MacCodrum, 1938, pp. 66-7.   [6] Robertson, 1799, p. 99.
[7]   'Gu 'n do chuir lad 'san àth thu,   Because they put thee in the kiln
          Gu's an d' thainig Fear Chluainidh.'   Until there came Cluny;
                                                                              —Sinton, 1906, pp. 249, 497.

* The entrance of the flue (H) does not seem to have had a special term in Benbecula.

do know, on the other hand, that these kilns were to be found as far to the south as the island of Arran. Headrick's account, published in 1807, is worth quoting *in extenso*:

> Every farm has at least one kiln upon it; because, here, the corn is not dried at the mill where it is ground, but at the farm where it is produced. These kilns are generally of very awkward construction; sometimes not covered from the rain, except by blankets supported on poles. The corn is laid upon straw, spread upon cross poles situated a little below the mouth of the inverted cone, which is the figure of the kiln. The fuel is a fire of peats, or brushwood, in the mouth of a small aperture which conducts into the bottom of the kiln. Often the flame sets fire to the straw, and corn incumbent upon it, and it always happens that the corn is irregularly dried, and a quantity of it excapes through the straw, and is lost . . . the kiln is often common to the village.[1]

The Færoese corn-kiln, *sodnur*, although typologically nearer the corn-kilns of the northern Shetland Islands,[2] is clearly related terminologically to the Hebridean *sòrn*.[3] Rasmussen, in an important discussion of the history of the corn-kiln,[4] suggests that the term was borrowed from the Celts by the Vikings[5]—the form *þorn* is to be found in a document dated 1314 relating to a corn-kiln at Kvål in Sognedal.[6] He concludes, however, that the Færoese kiln is not cognate with what he calls the Romano-Celtic type, nor to the corn-drying structures of North-eastern Europe—which form a complex of their own[7]—but is more probably evolved from Central European buildings in which flax and fruit are dried.[8] He suggests, moreover, that the conical corn-drying structures from Central Russia, *šiš*, have a similar origin, since they cannot be conveniently fitted into any other typological sequence.[9] The question of the relationship of the Hebridean corn-kiln to these other structures cannot, however, be defined until we have more positive ethnographic material.

It is interesting to note that in the more northerly of the Færoes, Norðeroyarna, where the corn-kiln was not introduced until quite late, a utensil not dissimilar to the Hebridean *tarran* was used for drying the ears of corn over the fire. This container, *meis*, had wooden sides and a mesh bottom made from woollen thread. It was seen in use by Jens Christian

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[1] Headrick, 1807, p. 314. The kiln at Kilwhinlick in North Bute described by Marshall (1935) may well be of the same type, but his account is inadequate. A kiln in a cave in the north of Islay is reported by Martin, 1703, p. 241, but I have been unable to identify his place-name exactly.

[2] See the description by Rasmussen of kilns at Koltur and Sando, and by Williamson from Froðbour and Koltur: Rasmussen, 1955, pp. 138–9; Williamson, 1948, pp. 206–8.

[3] This interconnection is to be discussed in a forthcoming article by Professor Chr. Matras, of the University of Copenhagen.

[4] Rasmussen, 1955.   [5] Bugge, 1905, pp. 257, 353–87.

[6] Visted & Stigum, 1951–2, Vol. I, p. 113.   [7] Cf. Laid, 1954.   [8] Rasmussen, 1955, p. 150.

[9] The conical structure (Russian *šiš*) is known among the Čeremiss and Finnish groups of the middle Volga—Heikel, 1888, pp. 1–3; Sirelius, 1907, pp. 58, 63–5. Jussilainen believes that this type is of late provenance, and not related to other corn-drying structures—Jussilainen, 1952—but cf. Laid, 1954, especially pp. 30–1, n. 20.

Svabo in 1781–2.[1] One other feature of Færoese corn-drying is reminiscent of the Hebrides: the trampling of the corn by barefooted women. Thus Debes wrote in 1673: 'Then instead of threshing, the women tread the ears apart with their bare feet.'[2]

From a later description of the process by Jørgen Landt it appears that trampling was designed to bruise the ears of corn prior to threshing with a stick.[3] Theoretically this should not be necessary, and it would be interesting to know if the practice is a survival from an earlier method of corn-drying, or marks an early stage in the development of threshing technique.[4]

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[1] Rasmussen, 1955, p. 136.   [2] Debes, 1673, p. 257.   [3] Landt, 1810, p. 291.
[4] The distribution of threshing by trampling is discussed by Trotzig, 1943, pp. 168–73.

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The Early Plough in Europe

F. A. Aberg

KNOWLEDGE of ancient agriculture has grown rapidly in recent years and to-day there is a considerable literature on the subject. To cover the origin of the plough and its introduction into Europe is beyond the scope of this paper,[1] and I intend to consider only the evidence relating to its nature and use during the prehistoric and Roman periods in Europe. This material falls into three groups: 1. That relating only to wooden ploughs, which have no metal parts. 2. The use of iron plough-shares with early ploughs. 3. The appearance of the heavy plough using a coulter as well as a plough-share.

The first traces of prehistoric ploughing in northern Europe are dated to about 1600 B.C., and were discovered in Holland. Two sets of furrow marks crossing each other at right angles were found beneath a Bronze Age barrow at Gasteren,[2] where they were preserved as triangular grooves in the subsoil. If made simultaneously these furrows prove not only the use of the plough at this very early date, but also that cross-ploughing was practised. Similar evidence only slightly later in date, has been found in Denmark also beneath Bronze Age barrows, and in one example at Vesterlund[3] the criss-cross furrows are believed to be fourteenth century B.C. Marks of this nature offer only slight evidence and little more than the presence of ploughs, some hundreds of years before the earliest dated field-systems can be proved. Gutmund Hatt has suggested that marks of cross-ploughing found in Denmark were made by a plough with a horizontal sole,[4] but it is difficult to infer any plough type on such slender evidence. In the light of the number of sites where furrows have been found beneath barrows, some consideration should be given to the possibility that they have a ritual connection.

For more information relating to the ploughs used in Europe during the Bronze Age, we must look to the rock drawings of Scandinavia and the Maritime Alps. These show wooden ploughs equivalent to the Latin Aratrum, and they belong to a class now widely called Ards (a Danish term increasingly used due to the pre-eminence of the work done in this field

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[1] This paper was read to Section H of the British Association for the Advancement of Science at its Dublin Meeting, 1957.   [2] *Antiquity*, xx, 1946, p. 158.
[3] *Antiquity*, xx, 1946, p. 38.   [4] P. V. Glob: *Ard og Plov* (1951), p. 124.

by Scandinavian scholars). The distinguishing features of these ploughs are a long wooden beam reaching to the yoke, a symmetrical form, no proper mouldboard and only one handle. The early rock drawings show that two types of ard were present, a division that coincides with the evidence from fragments of wooden ploughs found in Danish and North German bogs. I will, therefore, describe each type of light plough in turn.

The first group is characterized by a horizontal sole, to which the other parts are subsidiary. At Litsleby and Finntorp in Denmark[1] rock drawings show light ploughs drawn by two oxen, harnessed to a long curved beam. The beam is joined to a horizontal sole, and fitted immediately behind it is a vertical stilt. The Walle plough[2] (Fig. 1) from a bog in North Germany
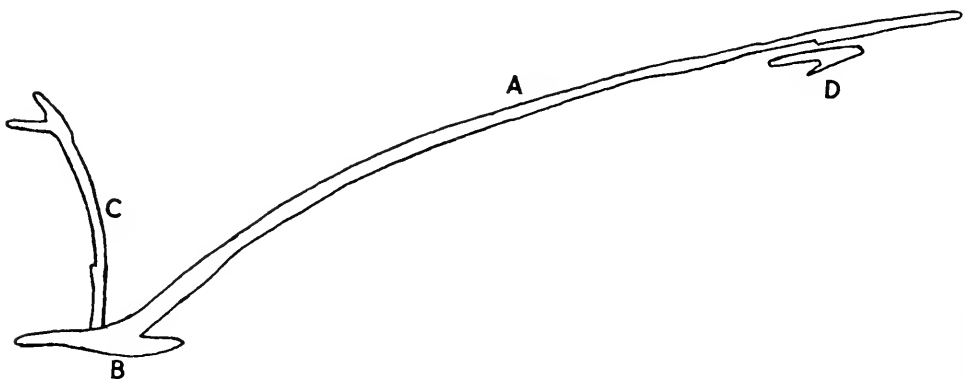
FIG. 1. THE WALLE PLOUGH. *A*—Beam. *B*—Sole. *C*—Stilt. *D*—Tie Hook.
After P. V. Glob: *Ard og Plov*.

shows that a natural fork was utilized as the plough-beam and sole. The beam, 12 feet long, was made from a branch, while a section of the tree trunk was used as the long, narrow sole. A crook was added to the front of the beam to lash the yoke on, and a stilt fitted into the sole formed the handle to guide the implement. The Vebbestrup ard[3] from Denmark is very similar, but its beam is only 4 feet 6 inches long, and is pierced at the tip by three horizontal holes. With it was found a swingle tree, 22 inches long, and the ard is dated to the middle of the first millennium B.C. Another light plough of this type with a short beam was found at Daber-gotz[4] (Fig. 2). This has a vertical hole through the front of the beam and it was probably pegged to an overlapping pole which formed the link to the yoke, as in many of the ploughs shown on classical pottery and coins. The Dabergotz ard also possesses a spear-shaped share which fits

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 26.   [2] *Ibid.*, p. 111.   [3] *Acta Archaeologica*, XVI, 1945, p. 57.
[4] P. V. Glob, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

into the beam in a slanting position with its point resting on the tip of the sole. Its position is very similar to that of a coulter, and there may well be some link between them.
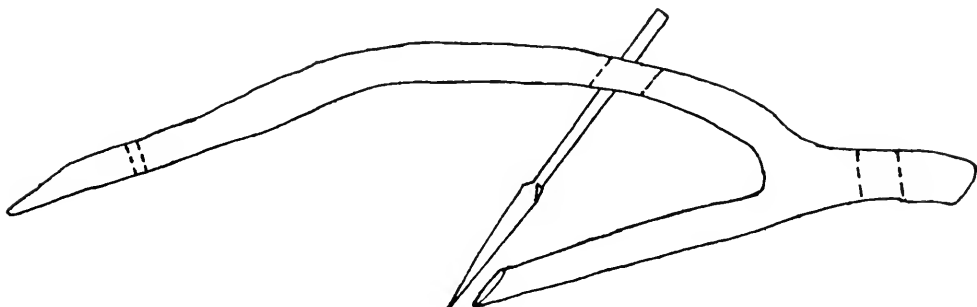

FIG. 2. THE DABERGOTZ PLOUGH.
After P. V. Glob: *Ard og Plov.*

The second type of light plough present in prehistoric Europe has all its parts fitted into a rectangular hole near the base of the curved beam, and the share enters the ground at an angle (Plates 1–2). Among the many Bronze Age rock drawings in the Maritime Alps the ploughs are all of this type, and it is also shown at Bohuslan. The fragments found in Danish bogs show variations in construction which suggest a sequence, though difficulties in dating some of the finds make it impossible to confirm this. All, however, seem to have been deposited as votive offerings during the pre-Roman and Roman Early Iron Age in Denmark. In the simplest, represented by finds at Norre Smedeby,[1] the share consisted of only two parts. One was a long narrow share, which rested on the second part (Fig. 3a) between two dowels fitted in a heavy plough-head 14 to 19 inches long and 4 inches thick. The plough-head also formed the tongue of the stilt and held it in the beam. An almost complete ard found at Dostrup[2] was very similar, having a long narrow share; a grooved plough-head and stilt; and a curved plough beam 10 feet long. The yoke was lashed to a tie-hook near the front of the beam. Near the base of the plough-beam is the rectangular hole to hold the parts in place. Its dimensions are much larger than those of the parts found to fit in it, and it is therefore likely that it also had an arrow-shaped share such as found at Trollerup[3] (Fig. 3b). The latter is very like the share of the Donnerupland plough, but has long tenons to fit the plough-head and foreshare. A recent bog find of a more complete Dostrup type ard may throw more light on this hypothesis. Until this discovery the Donnerupland[4] ard was the only plough which we are sure is complete, apart from the handle of

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[1] *Acta Archaeologica*, XVI, 1945, p. 93.   [2] *Ibid.*   [3] *Ibid.*   [4] *Ibid.*

the stilt. The beam is only 5 feet long and the overall length of the ard, with the stilt and shares fitted, is 8 feet. The fore-share, 44 inches long, rests on a broad arrow-shaped share between two dowels, and the stilt is held in place by a small tongue instead of a heavy plough-head. To com-
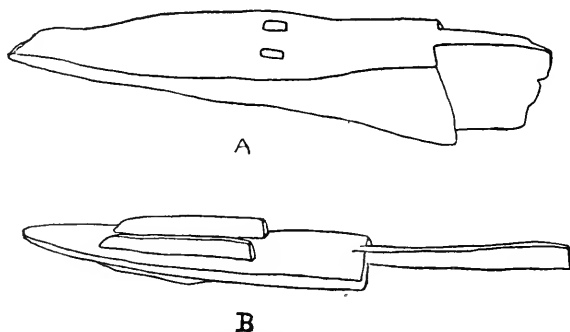

FIG. 3. (a) THE NORRE SMEDEBY PLOUGH-HEAD
(b) THE TROLLERUP SHARE
After P. V. Glob: *Ard og Plov.*

pensate for the missing support provided by the latter, the stilt and tongue of the arrow-shaped share are lashed to each other. A heavy plough-head and stilt, 4 feet 2 inches long, intended for use in a light plough of this type, has been found at Milton Loch Crannog in southern Scotland.[1] Though found alone it confirms the presence of ploughs very similar to the Donner-upland and Dostrup types, which a previous undated find at Whitereed Moss of a curved plough-beam with a rectangular hole through its base had suggested. The Pierce Bridge plough model also seems to be a variant of this group of ards.

Both types seem to have been present originally in most of Europe. The Bronze Age rock drawings show that normally a two ox team gave the tractive power, being harnessed by a neck yoke to the tip of a long plough-beam. The beam of the bronze plough model from Sussex which is in the British Museum seems shaped to fit an overlapping joint with a pole. The short beams of the Vebbestrup and Donnerupland examples could not be harnessed to the team in this fashion, and the horizontal holes through the tip of the beam and copsil found with the former suggest that traces were used to harness it, perhaps to a horse. Although horses were not normally used for this work, one rock drawing at Tegneby, Bohuslan[2] shows a horse harnessed to the plough by the tail, depicting perhaps some form of ritual ploughing.

Hard woods were normally used in the construction of the light plough, and the shares of the Dostrup-Donnerupland type are all of oak. The

[1] *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scotland,* LXXXVII, 1952, p. 143.   [2] P. V. Glob, *op. cit.,* p. 55.

friction parts of the ards often show heavy wear on the right side, suggest-
ing that an attempt was made to push the earth to one side, and where
possible turn the furrow. Tilting of the light plough is also done to pene-
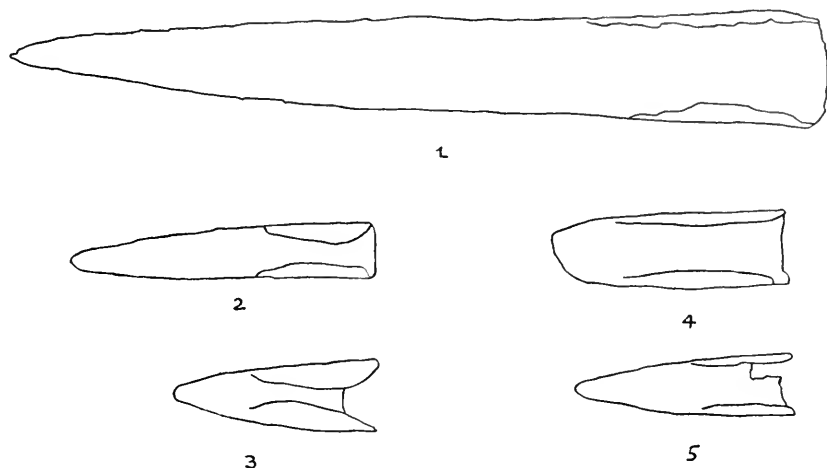trate deeper and avoid obstacles, besides being often adopted if the plough-

FIG. 4. EARLY IRON AGE PLOUGH-SHARES
1. Bigbury. 2. Spettisbury Ring. 3. Hunsbury. 4-5. The Caburn. Scale, 1:4

man walks on the furrow. During breaking-up operations such ards
would, if tilted, be quite capable of turning the furrow, but a spreading
action of the plough soil cannot be completely avoided because of the
symmetrical share, and the furrow could not be overturned consistently.
Classical writers like Columella show also that turning the furrow may
not be the main aim in ploughing with these implements, and that close,
deep furrows were wanted to avoid leaving unploughed balks. This was
certainly one of the difficulties when using an ard. A second ploughing
at right angles to the first, and often a third, was carried out to break down
the soil to a fine tilth, due partly to the absence of harrows. With a
symmetrical plough the team could be turned at the end of each furrow
to lay the new furrow alongside the previous one, so gradually moving
across the field. This method is normally described as one-way ploughing.
The length of the furrow was varied to suit the conditions, and no impor-
tance can be attached to Columella's reference to a furrow 120 feet long.
Light ploughs can almost certainly be used on heavier soils than are
normally suggested. At Slots Bjergby,[1] in Denmark, marks of cross-
ploughing were found beneath a barrow in a region of glacial clay, and an
arrow-shaped share has been found n a bog amid similar soil at Trollerup.

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

When iron was adopted for use for plough-shares the light plough was probably dominant all over Europe, and the symmetrical form of nearly all early shares suggests that many were used on them. A metal share gives the plough greater penetrative powers and protects it against hard wear, which affected bronze too rapidly for its use for this purpose. Mr. Payne's work has shown that the earliest iron shares in this country belong to the Iron Age A and B cultures.[1] They are simple, long narrow and socketted like the shares found at Bigbury (Fig. 4), the largest being $11\frac{1}{2}$–$17\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 2–$2\frac{1}{4}$ inches wide. Much shorter shares of the same type have sockets almost identical in size, suggesting that they were originally similar in length, but have suffered heavy wear.

Much wider shares first appear in Britain on Belgic sites and later on many Romano-British settlements. Many of these belong to a group with a flat blade which expands slightly in front of the socket (Fig. 5, 1–4). The smallest, from Silchester, is little wider than many Early Iron Age sockets, but the majority are 4–5 inches wide and 6–8 inches long. The British examples are often badly corroded and the share from Vechten, Holland, seems to preserve the original shape much better. Shares of this size could easily cut a detachable furrow slice if a coulter was used with them. Variations in shape also appear in the Roman period suggesting that the share was adapted to different conditions. Two from Chedworth and Blackburn Mill (Fig. 5, 5–6) have long flanges and a more pointed shape. The shares found in London (Fig. 5, 7–8) are distinctive in shape and extremely heavy, being similar in some respects to the share on the bronze model found in Sussex. This plough is of the Donnerupland type in which the beam is the vital part. The ridged sole consists of the base of the beam; the tongue of the stilt or a share beam, it is not very clear which; and a heavy wedge. The share is large and symmetrical which shows that even the biggest sockets could be used with an ard, although if fitted to a heavy plough they would be equally efficient to cut a solid furrow slice. The model also shows that ground-wrests were introduced at this time, which would clear the furrow when the plough was tilted. The use of two wrests, one on each side, shows that a form of one-way ploughing was still practised.

Evidence on the Continent and in the British Isles shows that at one time tanged shares were also used. Although not satisfactory in every respect, several unidentified iron objects from Hunsbury hill-fort are possibly shares of this type. Their form consists of a flat tongue up to $5\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide with a shank 10–$13\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. Similar objects on the continent identified as plough-shares appear to be considerably larger and more robust in construction. One form of tanged share is

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[1] *Arch. Journal*, CIV, 1947, p. 82. F. G. Payne, *Yr Aradr Gymreig* (1954), Chap. 1.
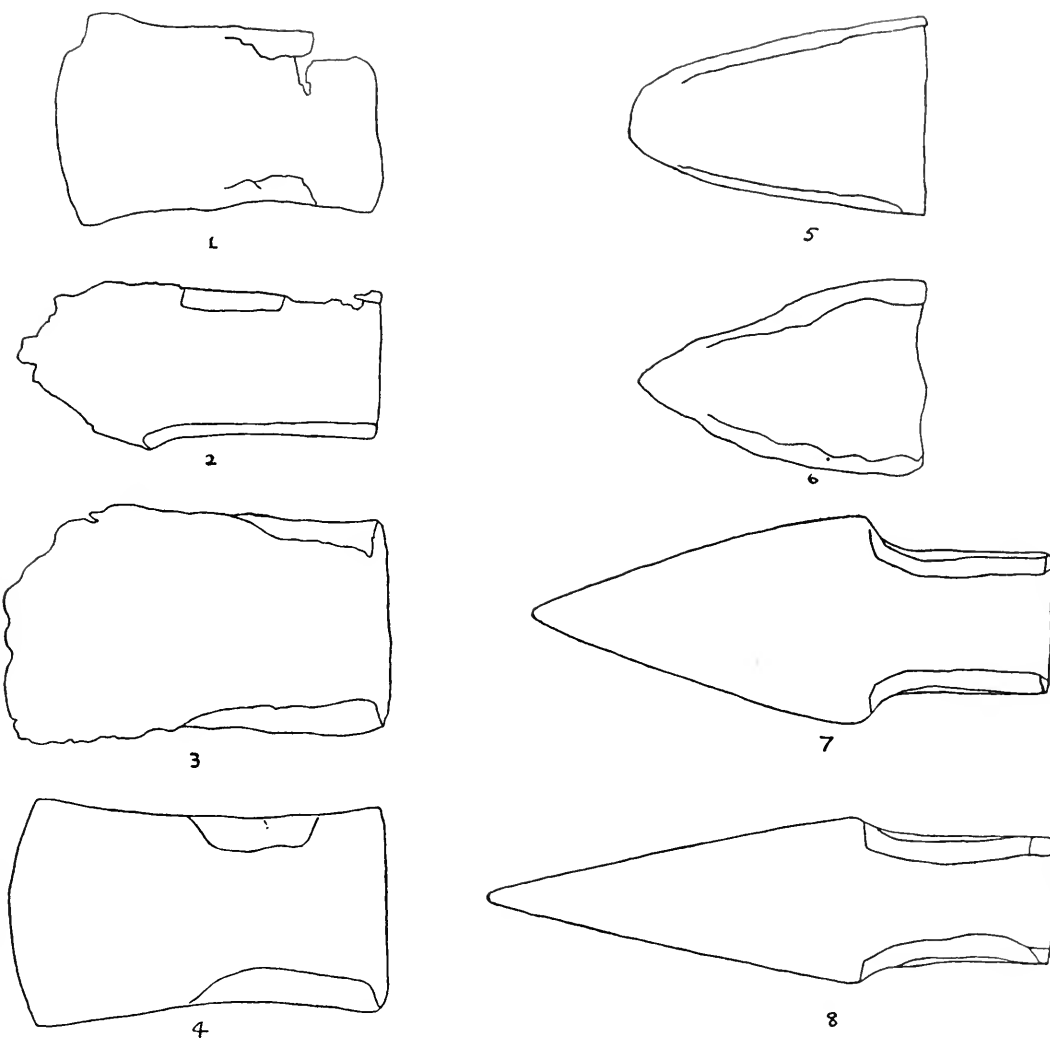
FIG. 5. ROMANO-BRITISH PLOUGH-SHARES

1. Bigbury.   2. Traprain Law.   3. Eckford.   4. Vechten, Holland.   5. Blackburn Mill.
6. Chedworth.   7. Walbrook, London.   8. Moorgate, London.   Scale, 1:4.

shown in a bronze model in the Cologne museum (Fig. 9) and in appear-
ance it resembles the arrow-shaped share of the Donnerupland plough.
The implement is obviously an ard of the same type, and like the Sussex
model is fitted with ground-wrests. Speyer museum has a share such as
was used in the model, the blade being 16½ inches long and 3⅖ inches
wide. Its total length is 31 inches. The Box share is the only proven

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example of a tanged share in this country, and its length of 23 inches is much less than the Speyer share. The bar point suggests that it was intended for use on strong soils.

Wide heavy shares like those from Eckford or Box do not provide by themselves evidence for the use of the furrow-turning plough in Britain. Though they could be fitted to ploughs designed to turn a furrow, their symmetrical form means that an element of doubt will always remain regarding their use. The use and presence of a heavy plough is, however, proved by other evidence which confirms the brief note of it in Pliny's Natural History.[1]

The purpose of the normal plough is to cut and detach a furrow from the land by means of a vertical knife, commonly called the coulter, and a horizontal share, the furrows then being lifted and overturned by the share beam and mould-board. The latter is usually fixed permanently to one side of the plough, which has a rectangular frame consisting of a horizontal sole, a vertical brace and stilt, and a beam. This became the normal plough in most of northern Europe, where it was developed, due to its strength and suitability for the heavy, damp soils.

The presence of a mould-board plough possibly in the Roman period is attested by fragments of a frame found at Tommerby[2] in Denmark. It consists of the brace 20 inches high and sole, which was studded with pebbles on its left side to protect it from heavy wear. Similar pebbles, probably fallen from this sort of plough, showing striations, have been found in southern Scotland and eastern England in post-Roman contexts. The period of the Tommerby fragments may also be considerably later than the Roman Iron Age, for only botanical evidence provides a dating, and the wood used was beech, which was, apparently, not well established in Denmark at that time.

Firmer evidence for the normal plough in Roman Europe is provided by the coulters,[3] found on continental and British sites of that date (Fig. 6). A Belgic form of knife may be represented by the Bigbury coulter, whose unusual sickle-like shape and small size, place its identification in some doubt, which will remain until a new find or information throws more light upon the matter. Another possibly pre-Roman coulter was found at Twyford Down, on a Belgic settlement site, and it forms the only evidence for the use of a heavy plough in Britain at this very early date. The number of Roman coulters found is now eighteen and many have also been found on the continent. The two most important finds in this country were hoards of six and five coulters at Silchester and Great Chesterford. They range in length from 20–36 inches, but the great majority are more than

[1] Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* XVIII, Chap. 48.   [2] P. V. Glob, *op. cit.*, p. 121.
[3] *Arch. Journ.*, CIV, 1947, p. 82.

27 inches long, and weigh up to 16 lb. The blade of the coulter is nor-
mally beaten out to one side only, so that it cuts the furrow as wide as
possible, while the angle of the face also turns the furrow to the other side.
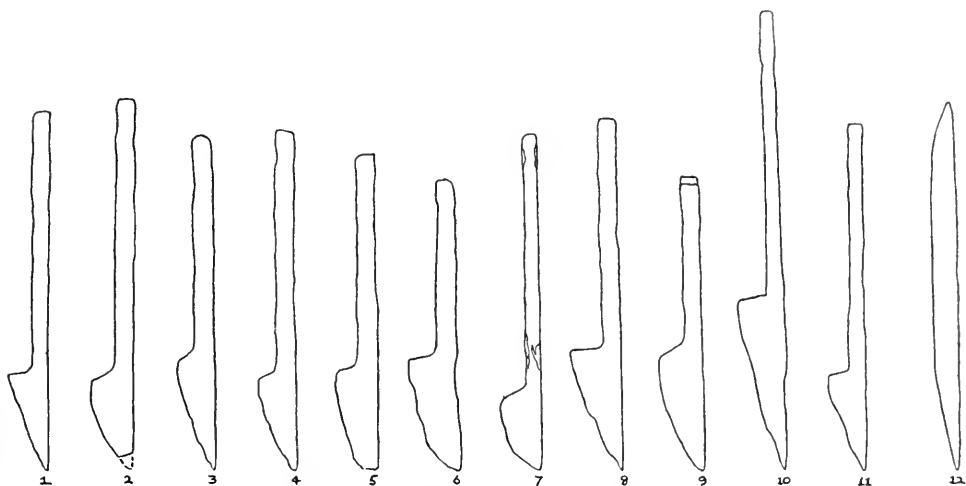When the furrow is always turned to the same side of the plough, usually

FIG. 6. ROMANO-BRITISH COULTERS
1–6. Silchester. 7. Brentford. 8. Great Witcombe. 9. British Museum, origin unknown.
10–12. Great Chesterford. Scale, 1:15.

the right, the ground must be divided into strips or lands for ploughing,
and since twelve of the British coulters have their blades set to one side,
we can infer that this method was adopted in the Romano-British period.
Coulters used in one-way ploughing must have some provision to swivel
them at the end of each furrow, so that when returning the slice is turned
in the opposite direction. None of those found in these islands have any
features which suggest this, but some Roman coulters on the continent
have a hole for a pin through the shank (Fig. 8) or a hook at the back of
the blade,[1] which would hold the knife in the beam while it was changed
from one side to the other. Both methods of using the normal plough
were therefore to be found in Europe, but it is not certain if they were
present in Britain.

As already pointed out it is difficult to judge if a symmetrical share was
used with a heavy plough, and some other evidence bearing on the
subject is needed. With a fixed furrow-side the plough-share need no longer
be symmetrical since it always undercuts the slice to turn it to the same
side. The share is therefore asymmetric and an ear on the furrow side
widens the cut that is made. Three such shares have been found in Britain.

[1] *Laos*, II, 1952, p. 51.

They are 3–4 inches wide and 9–10 inches long, so they would normally have cut a furrow 6 or 7 inches wide which was continually moved to one side. The shares from Brading and Folkestone have the ear on the right side, while that from Dinorben has it on the left (Fig. 7). Furrows made
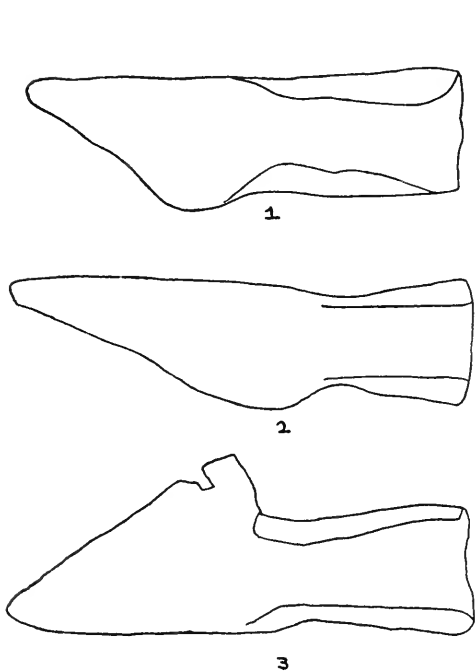

Fig. 7   Fig. 8

FIG. 7. ASYMMETRICAL PLOUGH-SHARES FROM ROMANO-BRITISH SITES
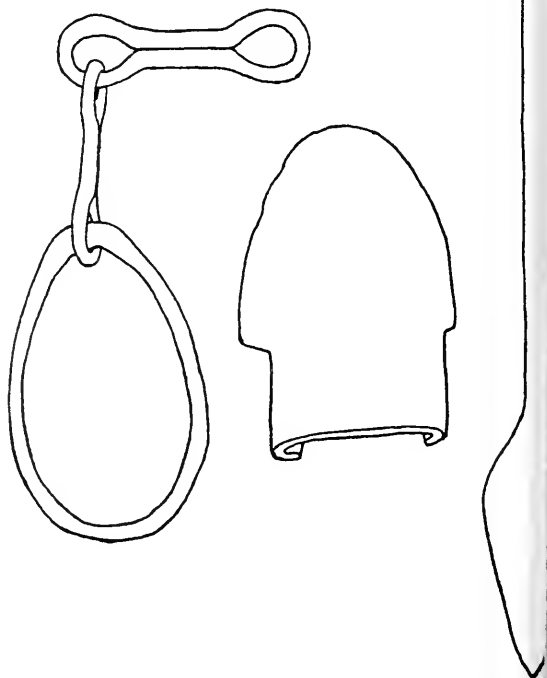1. Brading Villa. 2. Folkestone Villa. 3. Dinorben Hill-fort. Scale, 1:4.
FIG. 8. PLOUGH-TRACE, SHARE AND COULTER FOUND AT SCHANDORF,
EASTERN AUSTRIA. LA TENE OR ROMAN
After A. Barb.

by a wide share fixed to a mould-board plough have recently been dis-covered in Schleswig-Holstein,[1] where in 1956 Dr. Bantelmann found furrow slices 8 inches wide clearly preserved in the warp of a bank near marshland. He suggests that they were made by a mould-board plough in strata which are dated to the second century A.D.

Pliny's reference[2] to a plough with wheels suggests that a fore-carriage

[1] Newsletter No. 2, International Secretariat for Research on the History of Agricultural Implements.
[2] Pliny, *Hist. Nat.*, XVIII, Chap. 48.

was used to support the beam of the heavy plough, although no evidence has been found in this country to support this theory as on the mainland of Europe. The plough even with its more robust beam and heavy coulter could, however, quite easily balance on a skid, or rest on the yoke between the oxen as Mr. Payne has pointed out. Evidence for the presence of a fore-carriage in Roman Europe exists only in the eastern Limes,[1] where three plough-traces to link it to the plough have been found. The one shown (Fig. 8) was found at Schandorf, eastern Austria, in 1936, and is too large to be a yoke-ring. It consists of two links, each 8 inches long, and a ring 10 inches in diameter which fits over the beam, linking it to the rear of the fore-carriage. Wooden pegs adjust the position of the ring on the beam, and so move the fore-carriage and change the depth of the furrow.
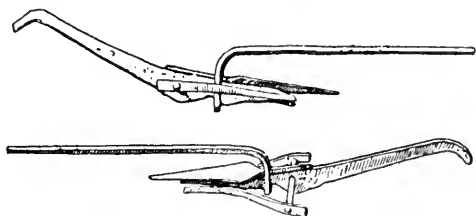

FIG. 9. BRONZE MODEL PLOUGH WITH A TANGED SHARE, IN THE COLOGNE MUSEUM
After P. Leser.

The improved control in ploughing is of great importance. With the plough-trace from Schandorf[2] were found a swivel coulter, 24 inches long, and a symmetrical share 7 inches wide (Fig. 8), and it is evident that a plough fitted with these irons could well be responsible for furrows of the sort found by Dr. Bantelmann in a second century A.D. context.

By the end of the Roman period it seems clear that a form of the normal plough using a coulter as well as a share, and in some areas with a fore-carriage, was present in a large part of north-western Europe, including Britain. Alongside it were used the symmetrical ards, which in a modified and improved form were still basically the same as the first ploughs to appear in Europe. In Britain and on the continent, the ground-wrest had been added to the ard, and its efficiency was greatly improved by a variety of iron plough-shares. A form of the Tommerby plough may also have been known in Britain. To add more detail to a pattern which is obviously complex, more comparative checking of early plough parts, and wherever possible, their site and date, is greatly needed.[3]

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[1] *Laos*, II, 1952, p. 51. [2] *Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft*, LXVII, 1937.
[3] I acknowledge here the help received at all times from the Archaeology Department of the National Museum of Wales; and among others, from Mr. Robert Aitken, Professor Bratanic of Zagreb, and Mr. Ffransis Payne, of the Welsh Folk Museum. My thanks are also due to Mr. Leslie Alcock for his advice and encouragement.

Notes

A Manx Fireplace (Chiollagh)

A large number of stone-built cottages are still to be found in the Isle of Man, some few with their straw thatch intact, and many 'tholtans' or ruins remain, particularly in the upland regions. These cottages are of single story construction, with a simple partition, usually of wood, to form the bedroom. The door opens near the centre of the front wall directly into the living room. Blundell[1] in 1657 wrote, 'Their habitations are mere hovels, compacted of stones and clay for the walls, thatched with broom; most commonly they contain one room only'.

The fireplace is placed on the gable and in plan these cottages may be compared with similar ones in Wales and Ireland. As Peate[2] points out, the gable-chimney house consisting of only one room was formerly common in Ireland and Wales, and this also applies to the Isle of Man. The sequence of evolution by partitioning with wood, and then erecting a half-loft over the sleeping-end, also appears to have been followed as in Wales.[3] An easily observed example of this stage is 'Harry Kelly's cottage', preserved by the Manx Museum, in Cregneash.

Consideration will now be given to the fireplace. In a cursory survey of this type of cottage in the Island, two main types of fireplace have been observed: one with a solid mass of stonework extending across the entire width of the house, the other of a more slender stone jamb construction, often with wooden cupboards built in at each side.[4] Again, Harry Kelly's cottage illustrates this latter type.

This note is primarily concerned with placing on record a fireplace of the first type. It is massively built of stone and was observed in a derelict cottage at the western end of the Karran farmstead, in the village of Cregneash, at the southern end of the Island.

The cottage is 12 feet wide, the fireplace opening being 6 feet 9 inches wide, but placed acentrally: the distance from left wall to fireplace opening being 3 feet 6 inches, and that from the right wall 2 feet. Into the left-hand masonry block is built a 'beehive' oven, thus accounting for the greater
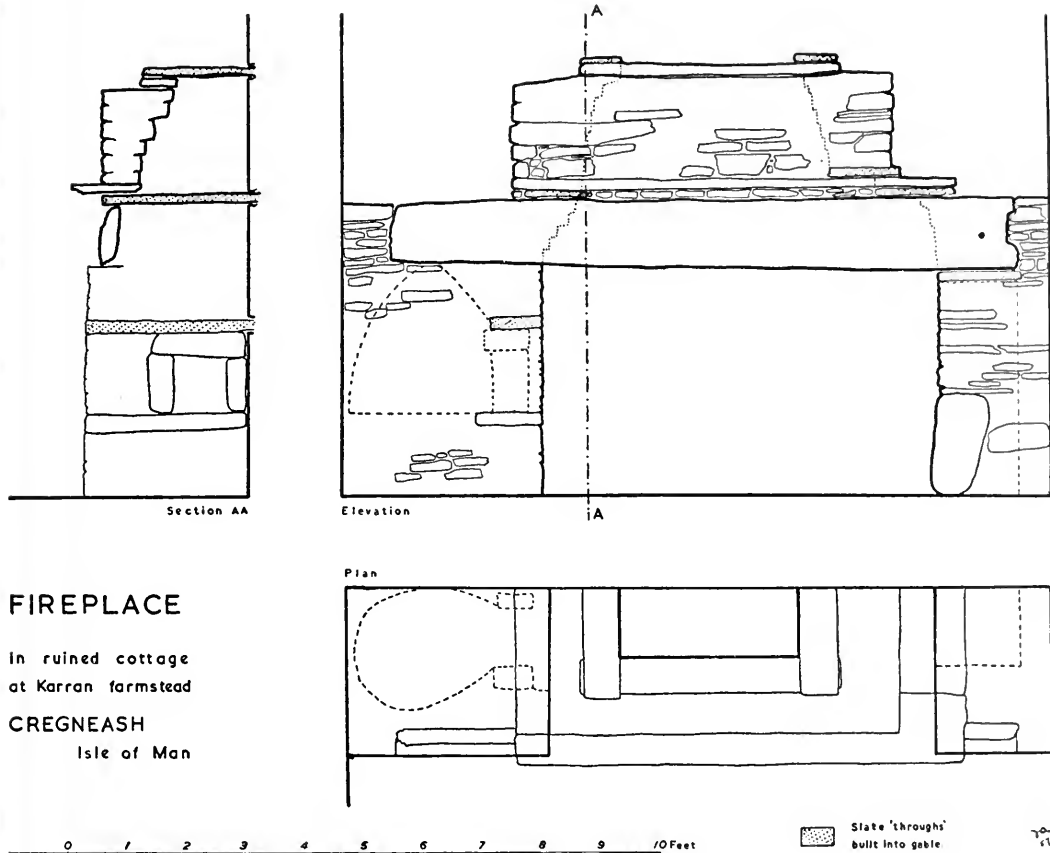
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[1] Blundell, W.: 'An exact chronographical and historical discovery of the hitherto unknown Isle of Man . . . etc.' Vols. 25 and 27 of the publications of the Manx Society, ed. W. Harrison, 1876–7.
[2] Peate, I. C., *The Welsh House* (3rd edn.), p. 110.   [3] Peate, I. C., *op. cit.*, p. 111.
[4] See also Williamson, K., 'Characteristics of the Chiollagh,' *Manx Museum Journal*, June, 1938, pp. 24–5.

width of that pillar, since the oven extends for 3 feet from front to back at its base. A 'stone cupboard', 3 feet 8 inches high, 16 inches wide and 17 inches deep, is constructed in the right-hand pillar.

Section AA   Elevation

Plan

FIREPLACE

In ruined cottage
at Karran farmstead

CREGNEASH

Isle of Man

0   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10 Feet

Slate 'throughs'
built into gable

The lintel of the fireplace is a remarkable block of slate, placed on edge, almost 11 feet in length and tapering slightly in width from 15 inches at the right to 12 inches at the left. It is 4 inches thick at its greatest thickness. At suitable points, horizontally laid pieces of slate tie the masonry of the fireplace and flue into the stonework of the gable; these are indicated on the drawing.

Above the lintel a horizontally laid piece of slate forms a mantel-shelf, and on this is built up the next section of flue, 6 feet 6 inches wide and 2 feet high. At the top of this, a further stepping back of the flue occurs, and it would appear that the final vertical flue ran upwards from here. This ledge is 7 feet from the floor. Above, the supposed flue is now missing.

It will be noted from the drawing that although the fireplace opening is markedly acentral, the flue, at the last point at which it now exists, is almost central on the gable. Thus the chimney would doubtless emerge on the line of the ridge. Mention of the position of the fireplace opening has already been made; the reason for distorting the flue in order that the chimney shall emerge on the ridge is obviously connected with the method of straw thatching. It would be difficult, if not impossible, to make a water-tight seal at the ridge side of a chimney, should this emerge along-side the ridge. The method of thatching with loose straw and crossed ropes ('roped thatch') has been described by Innocent[1] and Buchanan.[2]

Finally, it must be noted that, apart from the oven and stone cupboard, no other apertures or 'cupboards' exist in this particular fireplace. Its back wall is intact and free from any such feature.

FRANK ATKINSON.

A Scottish Ploughshare Type

The object of this note is to draw attention to a type of spear plough-share which appears to have been little known outside Scotland.

The three specimens shown in Plate I (*b–d*) are in the Anthropological Museum of the University of Aberdeen. I am very grateful to the Hon. Curator, Professor R. D. Lockhart, for the photographs and for permission to reproduce them here. Share *b*, 220 millimetres long and 128 broad, came from Kildrummy, Aberdeenshire; the provenance of the other two specimens is unknown.

As will be seen from the plate, the main characteristic which distinguishes these Scottish examples from other spear-shares is their open, grid-like construction. It is difficult to account for this peculiarity. Economy in iron can hardly have been the reason, since they were used contempora-neously with shares of normal solid form. Both forms are depicted on the carved tombstones which are such a remarkable feature of some Lowland churchyards, and which were the subject of a paper by D. Christison in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Vol. XXXVI. Many of the farmers' gravestones illustrated by Christison bear carvings of ploughs, harrows, ox-yokes and ploughshares. Some of these last are reproduced in Fig. 1 by permission of the Hon. Editor, Mr. H. M. Paton. Among them occur what is possibly the earliest delineation of the type of share under discussion. This, together with a coulter, is carved on a stone dated 1681 at Logie-Pert, Angus (Fig. 1*a*.) Sometimes the coulter is shown thrust through the share, thus emphasizing the latter's grid-like construction, as in the example dated 1756 at

[1] Innocent, C. F., *The Development of the English House* (Cambridge, 1916), p. 202.
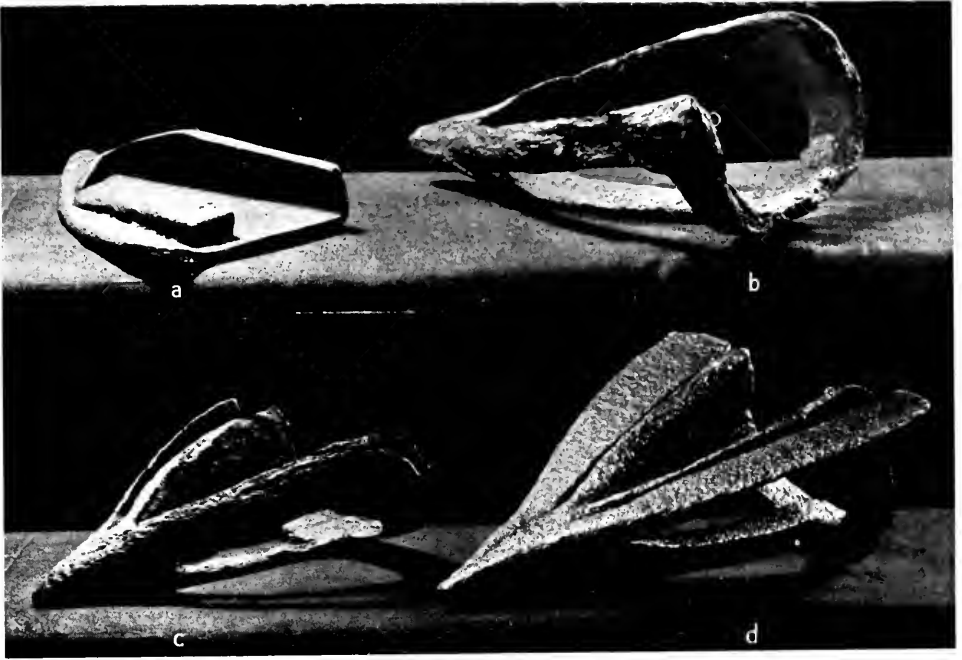[2] Buchanan, R. H., *Gwerin*, 1, p. 128.

PLATE I.   FOUR SCOTTISH PLOUGHSHARES

By permission of the Anthropological Museum, University of Aberdeen.
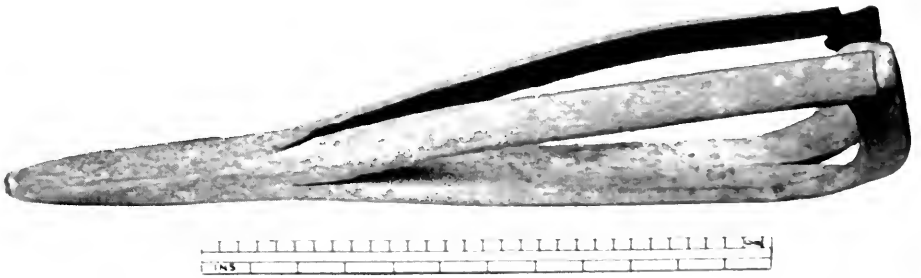

PLATE II.   PLOUGHSHARE FROM BALLYKEEL, CO. DOWN

By permission of Belfast Museum and Art Gallery.

Inverarity, Angus (Fig. 1*b*). Winged ploughshares of this open type also occur, e.g. at Thornton, dated 1784 (Fig. 1*c*), as well as normal solid types, e.g. at Kilmadock, Perth, dated 1627, and at Stirling (Fig. 1*d, e*). The unusual construction of one kind of eighteenth-century solid wing-share is shown in Plate I*a*. This share, the point damaged and bent downwards, is 160 millimetres long and 107 broad, and came from Corgarff, Aberdeenshire.

The plough on which all these shares were normally used was that known in Scotland as the 'old Scots plough'. It is depicted on some of the tombstones referred to above, and is described and illustrated in detail by Adam Dickson in his *A Treatise of Agriculture* (1762). This plough was still the most popular one in Scotland in Dickson's day and was, in his opinion, the best general-purpose implement 'for the lands of Scotland in

FIG. 1.

their present situation'. In type it was a normal rectangular-framed implement without wheels, essentially the same as those common throughout Britain before the introduction of the Rotherham plough. The use of spear or winged share, or, in Dickson's words, common or feathered sock, depended upon the nature of the ground. Dickson gives drawings of both shares. The only difference between the spear shares of his district (East Lothian and Berwickshire) and those shown above in Plates I and II, is one of size, his common sock being 'about two feet long'. Comparing both types of share, Dickson says, 'the common soke has greatly the advantage in stony land; and of this kind is a great part of our land in Scotland: for the common soke, by the sharpness of its point, and the gentleness of its sloping towards the head, escapes many shocks from the stones, which would put the plough with the feathered soke out of its direction, and endanger its being broken to pieces.'

What Dickson says of the ability of this kind of share to open a proper furrow is of interest. He says that as the coulter opens the earth on a line with the left side of the head, 'if the soil has any cohesion, the earth of the furrow will be wholly raised from the left side, and as the soke moves forward, will be thrown on the right side of the sheath, and by the casting out of the mold-board, or the rising of the wrist, will be turned over'. It is admitted, however, that if the earth were insufficiently cohesive, a part of it would fall to the left side instead of being turned to the right. To remedy this, Dickson suggested making the share straight on the
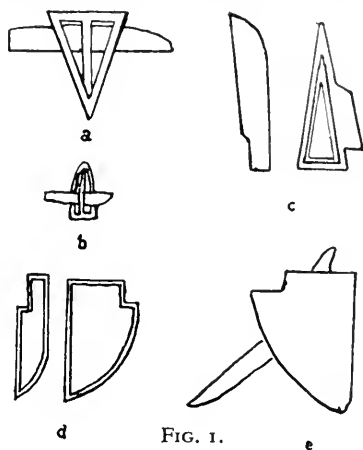
landside, like a winged share. As James Small discovered later, this was going too far, because then the point 'would be too much to the left, and would not raise up all the furrow' (*A Treatise on Ploughs and Wheel Carriages*, 1784, p. 137). Small's Figure 19 shows that he made this type of share with the point lying just slightly to the right of the landside.

Few of these open-type shares have been recorded outside Scotland. Mr. D. R. Weatherup has drawn my attention to the Irish example shown in Plate II which comes from Ballykeel, co. Down, and which is now in the Belfast Museum. There is also a specimen in the National Museum of Ireland which Mr. A. T. Lucas informs me was obtained at Ballindrait, co. Donegal, from a descendant of one of the many Scots who settled in that particular district. Mr. Lucas suggests that in Ireland this type of share was an importation to such areas of Scottish settlement.

F. G. PAYNE.

Butter by the Yard

Visitors to Cambridge before the 1920's were always fascinated by the appearance of the butter on sale in the market and shops, for it was made up into yard-long rolls, each wrapped in muslin, of about 1 inch in diameter and 1 lb. in weight. The origin of the custom is lost in antiquity, but the practice began, probably, to assist the college butteries in the distribution of the undergraduates' 'sizes' or daily allowance of food and drink, since short lengths of butter could easily and quickly be cut from the long rolls without weighing.

The butter was carried into Cambridge from the farms where it was made, in special wicker baskets, just over a yard long, and from 4 to 6 inches deep, some with and some without lids. Many of these baskets were made in Cambridge in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries by John Hutt of Peas Hill, and his successor John Shrive. An early photograph of Hutt's shop shows a fine display of baskets of all kinds, while his fascia board announces that he also cured hams on the premises, using the wicker shavings from his workshop. Three of the butter baskets are preserved in the dairy section of the Cambridge and County Folk Museum, together with the long wooden boards on which the rolls were shaped by hand, and a yard stick used in a Comberton dairy for checking the length of the completed rolls.

Many writers in the past have testified to the excellence of Cambridgeshire butter, which was dispatched by river from villages in the north of the county to Cambridge, whence large quantities were sent daily to London by road. Perhaps the fullest account of its actual manufacture is given by William Ellis in *The Modern Husbandman*, published in 1741. He declares Cambridge butter to be 'the best sort of Salt Butter sold in

London' and describes how it was made in the village of Over 'where they make the best butter for the Colleges'. The Over dairy farmers bought cows which would calve in each winter month, to ensure a good yellow butter. The animals were turned out to grass in April, and the average yield from each cow was 12 quarts a day.

Churning was done two or three times a week in barrel or upright sweep churns (a noted barrel churn at Denny was reputed to hold a hogshead of cream), and Ellis records the current belief that the cows must be milked before sunrise, ' . . . for it is a Proverb, If the Cows be not milked by the Time the Herdsman blows His Horn, it spoils the Dairy-maid's Marriage; and he blows about Sun-rising.' In cold weather churn-ing was sometimes done near a fire, but this affected the taste and colour of the butter; the dairymaid preferred to wash out the churn in boiling water before putting in the 22 gallons of cream which would produce about 70 lb. of butter. A quart of salt was put to 30 lb. of butter, which was finally shaped into yard rolls, put into the baskets, and hung all night in the well.

In the Registry of the University of Cambridge is kept a curious object which is still carried by one of the Proctors in University processions, and which has always been called the 'University Butter Measure', although its appearance suggests more that of a liquid measure. It consists of a narrow, shallow trough about $32\frac{1}{2}$ inches long, divided at unequal distances by pieces of metal, with a long handle attached to the top by a rounded hinge. The measure, together with a strip of iron for sliding into the front of the trough, is fitted into a thin iron sheath, now somewhat worn at the ends. The reason why the University should be concerned with the measuring of butter goes back to the Peasants' Rising of 1381.

The levying of the unpopular poll-tax led to local revolts in Kent and Essex in the troubled period which followed the Black Death, and these local rebellions were the signal for a much larger rising in 1381 in many parts of England, especially in the south-east and East Anglia. In Cambridge the townsfolk seized the opportunity to make violent attack upon the University, whose privileges they had long hated and resented. On June 15, 1381, a noisy rabble destroyed the house of William Wigmore, the University Bedell, seized books and charters from Corpus Christi College, and broke open the University Chest in Great St. Mary's Church, destroying the charters and other muniments it contained. On the following day the town rebels were joined by those from neighbouring villages, and together they forced the University to execute deeds renounc-ing their privileges, and compelled the Masters and Scholars of the Colleges to deliver up their statutes and charters, which were then publicly burnt on the market place.

In November, after order was restored, the University made complaints to Parliament about the behaviour of the Cambridge rebels, and the Mayor, Bailiffs, and four representatives of the burgesses were summoned to London to answer the charges. Richard II decreed that the town must be punished, and this he did by increasing the fee-farm of the town by 4 marks and transferring from the town to the University the keeping of the assay of bread, wine and beer, the punishments of vendors of bad food and the supervision of the weights and measures. So it was that from 1381 until the passing of the Cambridge Award Act in 1856 the University had the sole right to test weights and measures, and the University Butter Measure remains as a symbol of the right which included, of course, the measuring of the lengths of butter displayed in the town for sale.

In 1823 the University had made a new set of bell-metal measures, from a half bushel to a half peck, to serve, together with their Winchester bushel measure of 1601, as the standards of the town. These are now kept in the Folk Museum, and in October 1956 they figured in an interesting ceremony in the Guildhall.

At the passing of the Cambridge Award Act in 1856 when many difficulties between University and town were finally smoothed out, all the University scales and measures were lent to the Mayor and burgesses provided that they entered into a bond for £400 for re-delivery of the standards on demand. On October 22, 1956, exactly 100 years after the signing of the bond, the University formally released the city of Cambridge from its obligations, the Council of the Senate having decided that the measures should henceforth remain permanently in the possession of the Corporation who had, in 1856, regained the right to supervise weights and measures. In the Guildhall the measures mentioned in the bond—23 local ones still in use and several obsolete ones including special scales with a long copper pan for weighing yard butter, were inspected by the Vice-Chancellor who, on finding them in the required 'good plight and condition', discharged the City from its obligations in the bond.

Yard butter, now only a memory among the older inhabitants of Cambridge, has thus played a part in the history of the University, the City, and even of the country. The golden rolls in their swathes of muslin have vanished since about 1920 from shop counters and market stalls, but the long baskets, the special butter scales, and a picture of a Mr. Smith delivering butter at a house door, his basket at his feet, are still in the Folk Museum as reminders of this old local custom.

ENID M. PORTER.

New Books

Caernarvonshire is fortunate in that it is among the later counties of Wales to be treated by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments. The earlier inventories of other Welsh counties, some of them published before the First World War, seem pathetically inadequate and shoddy when compared with the inventory of monuments in Anglesey, published in 1937. The Anglesey inventory, in turn, will apparently be dwarfed by this further addition to the series, for Caernarvonshire is to be covered in three volumes, to appear between 1956 and 1960.

In sharing out the County of Caernarvon into three areas suitably adapted for treatment in separate volumes, the Commission has very wisely fallen back upon the ancient territorial divisions of the region, and in this first volume, the area covered is the old *cwmwd* of Creuddyn ('the Llandudno peninsula' to modern minds, perhaps) and the *cantref* of Arllechwedd which includes those parts of the shire between the River Conwy and a line drawn almost due south from a point slightly to the east of Bangor.

This area is of great importance in historical times, since it was the gateway into Gwynedd, the last bastion of the independent princes of Wales, and the platform, as it were, from which Edward I directed the operations which finally bound Gwynedd in a chain of castellated boroughs. The 36 pages of text and diagrams, together with numerous plates, devoted in this volume to the castle and town of Conway, are a valuable contribution to the study of this period, and the frequent references to sources of further information, here as elsewhere in the volume, will be welcomed by students.

The military and governmental activities of the earlier Welsh principality are covered by adequate treatments of the castles at Degannwy (with its echoes of Maelgwn Gwynedd) and Dolwyddelan, the birthplace of Llywelyn the Great.

Parish churches inevitably receive considerable attention, but some nine Nonconformist chapels have managed to squeeze themselves in. It is most unfortunate that the Protestant Nonconformity, which has been such a vital factor—indeed, the very basis of life—in this area since the eighteenth

century, appears to have left so few material remains which would qualify for admission into such a volume as this.

Being concerned, however, with *ancient* monuments, much of this volume is naturally devoted to remains from the Dark Ages, Roman times and prehistoric times. These are well represented by hundreds of huts and hut-circles, various Roman forts and roads (including Canovium and stretches of the road to Segontium), scores of standing stones and various 'finds'. But above all, there is from the Neolithic Age the stone axe factory on Penmaen-mawr. A good sixteen-page treatment of the 'Graig Lwyd Group of Axe Factories' is included among the prefatory notes, which also contain a list of prehistoric finds in the area and a discussion of the roads of east Caernarvonshire. One naturally expects a high standard in the diagrams and photographs in a publication like this, and this is achieved here. Good use has been made of plan-diagrams to illustrate numerous examples of small cottages, obviating the need to rehearse the details in the text. For the larger houses, particularly Plas Mawr (Conway), Cochwillan, Maenan and others in Creuddyn, the full resources of the volume, text, diagrams and plates are brought into play. In treating of such domestic matters as estates, roads and bridges, the Commission was fortunate in that Caernarvonshire has been well documented in the *Record of Caernarvon* in the fourteenth century, and surveyed by Hyde-Hall in the early nineteenth century. In addition, the county has a well-organized department of archives and an industrious archivist. Frequent references to these sources show what good use the compilers made of them.

The chairman (the late Mr. Robert Richards) suggests in his preface that there are still some problems of presentation of material facing the compilers of these inventories. Changes in parish boundaries appear to cause trouble, and yet it is difficult to suggest any other suitable grouping of monuments. On the whole, an efficient index to each volume, together with the cross-references as given in this volume, seem to deal with the difficulty adequately.

On the other hand, the problem of locating a monument is not solved for the ordinary reader by giving what is for me, at any rate, a complicated National Grid Reference number of eight figures. And to rely on a grid system of which the Ordnance Survey Office cannot guarantee its permanence is short-sighted in a volume of such lasting importance. Pin-pointing a spot with such seemingly scientific exactness is all very well for specialist students (while the grid lasts), but for the ordinary user of the inventory, the extra cost which the inclusion of a general map of the area would entail, would have been well worth while. Such a map should show the position of the monuments in relation to easily recognized features of the present-day landscape. It would not need to cope with many of the

hundreds of hut groups and other similar monuments in detail, since the students of those may be expected to follow grid systems; but the map would be sufficient to lead the uninitiated to the major monuments which are of more general interest.

There are some other omissions and mistakes to which reference may be welcomed. While it is explained on p. xxxviii that at the end of every entry 'a note is given of the condition of the monument, the National Grid Reference and a date' [of the latest examination], the final comment of every entry, e.g. '13 NW Unnoted', is not explained. I gather that it refers to the sheet number of one of the ordnance maps.

Place-names are usually correctly spelled, though I noticed only one *n* in *Llynnau Mymbyr* (331), 'Roe-Wen' (23) for *Y Ro-wen*, 'Hafodtai' (lxxviii) for *Hafotai*, and in 367 'Tudno's cradle' has become 'Tudno's fever'. In No. 331, too, the Welsh letter *dd* has been split where the name Dolwyddelan has been run over two lines of print: the correct division would have been Dolwydd-elan. On p. lxxvi, line 17, the name of the river should be *Llugwy*, and not *Lledr*. On p. lxxviii, the Peat House is illustrated on Plate 4, not Plate 3. One of the illustrations on Plate 33 is of the pulpit at Llanrhychwyn (not 'Llanchychwyn').

The glossary contains among many other things, of course, a definition of a 'platform hut or house'. I gather that at the time when they were compiling this inventory, members of the Commission's staff were under the impression that such a distinctive type could be isolated, but it is doubtful whether this is established. Any house on a steep slope has to be dug in at one end and built up at the other if it is to have a reasonably level floor.

The remaining two volumes, and particularly the third, in which the archaeology and history of the county as a whole will be treated, are eagerly awaited in Caernarvonshire.

FRANK PRICE JONES.

F. J. North: *Sunken Cities: Some legends of the coast and lakes of Wales.* Pp. 256. Price 18s. University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1957.

This book studies human fallibility which does not pursue objective inquiry far enough and copies others' mistakes. Successive elaborations of stories have given scope to near-modern romancers and their superstitions about providential happenings and divine judgements. Yet, Giraldus Cambrensis acutely ascribed the 'noise' at Llyn Syfaddon to the cracking of ice, and Leland also rightly argued that the lake's line of blood was seen when the inflowing stream had stirred up red sandstone mud in its upper course. Fox concluded that the sunken city here was a crannog flooded in the phase of cool wet climate after about 500 B.C., a phase about which Dr. North says a good deal. Llys Helyg and the Caer Aranrhod of the

romancers are masses of boulders left on the sub-tidal floor after washing away of a glacier's load of clay in which they had come down. Cantre'r Gwaelod was a boulder clay lowland in N.E. Cardigan Bay that may have lasted on into the Neolithic phase and has left the Sarnau as remnants. These sinkings are due to rise of sea level as the glaciers of the Ice Age melted and the sea then gradually ate into the boulder clays. The book is interesting and should warn us all against too facile imaginations.

H. J. FLEURE.

Elwyn Davies (edit.): *A Gazetteer of Welsh Place-names.* Pp. xxxvii, 118. Price 10*s.* 6*d.* University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1957.

This work, prepared by the Language and Literature Committee of the Board of Celtic Studies of the University of Wales, and edited by the Board's Secretary, is one of the results of the help, which the Board has given to the Ordnance Survey, in the preparation of the sixth edition of the 1-inch map. The place-names included are followed in every case by an indication of what the named feature is, the civil parish and county in which it lies, and a four-figure reference to the National Grid. The Welsh names of towns, parishes, chief natural features, villages, etc., are given and some farm names are included.

Unfortunately, the list is far from being exhaustive, but the Editor gives reasons for some of the omissions. It is to be hoped that the correct forms, as listed here, will be used in the future on all maps and signposts. In the past much nonsense has been written and spoken about Welsh place-names by those who have not mastered even the Welsh alphabet. Welsh orthography is now on a precise and scientific basis, and the fanciful spellings of an age long past were discarded early in this century. The Welsh double only the letters *r* and *n* (*ll* and *dd* are separate sounds not to be confused with *l* and *d*) and the form *Bettws* is here correctly written *Betws.* In the same way, Llandysul (not *Llandyssul*) and Llangamarch (not *Llangammarch*). In general, the accent in Welsh is on the penultimate syllable: English readers of this work will therefore know that a hyphenated form such as Bwlch-y-groes has the stress on each element in the name, but that Bwlchnewydd has the stress on the penult.

It is to be hoped that the county and other authorities concerned will now discard corrupt spellings in favour of the true forms given in this work. For instance, Monmouthshire's Llangattock Vibon Abel should be Llangatwg Feibion Afel; there are several such debased forms in all the thirteen counties.

IORWERTH C. PEATE.

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